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THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST

THE
LIFE AND TEACHING OF
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

BY
NIKOLA AVANCINI

A NEW TRANSLATION BY
KENNETH MACKENZIE
Bishop of Brechin

LONDON
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE
NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, W.C. 2
NEW YORK · THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

MANY people feel the need of help in meditation. Ideally, no doubt, we ought to be able to do without books : and certainly we have to beware of becoming dependent on them. But there are few who do not improve their own meditations by having before them, for at least occasional use, some really good models of the art. Many priests, and even members of religious orders, have used these *Meditations of Avancini* habitually in their original Latin form, and have acknowledged that they came back to them again and again. Several eminently devout persons have said that it was the devotional book from which they were never willingly separated. Some of us have been longing for years to be able to recommend them to those who have no knowledge of Latin. Our English books of *Meditations* are mostly either scanty in the actual number of meditations given, or somewhat over-elaborated in method. Sometimes, it must be confessed, they are very dull, and sometimes too intellectual. If we have to use a book, we probably wish to use it over the period of a full year, but we do not, or should not, wish to have everything done for us. The terseness and pregnancy of *Avancini* secure that in a book of moderate size there shall be ample material, and yet sufficient scope for those who are willing to make a real personal effort in their mental prayer. The translator cannot hope to have fully reproduced these characteristics in the more diffuse medium of English, but he has tried never to forget these supreme excellences of his author. The value of the translation will very largely depend on the extent to which he has succeeded in

maintaining the seed-like form in which the spiritual teaching is given in the original.

Nikola Avancini wrote his *Meditations* in the seventeenth century. There are a few, though remarkably few, passages which would raise difficulties in the minds of most Anglicans. I have thought it best to follow for the most part the guidance of the Presbyter Ignotus of the nineteenth century, who laid many priests under an obligation to him by adapting the *Meditations ad usum Cleri Anglicani*. This would be an outrage had the intention of the translation been purely literary: but for purposes of devotion it would seem a pity to hamper the profitableness of the book by including matter unsuitable for most of those who would be likely to use it.

The *Meditations* for the Second Saturday and the Third Sunday in Advent, "On the Faith of the Incarnation," appear to be original compositions of the Presbyter Ignotus himself.

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

OF THE ETERNAL GENERATION OF THE WORD

1. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John i. 1.*

Consider : The Son of God is in Himself the Word of the Father ; of one substance with the Father ; His Image, wherein are reflected all the unlimited perfections communicated to the Son by the Father, Eternity, Immensity, and the like. The Son proceedeth from the Father through that Understanding where-with the Father knoweth Himself and all that is His. Exercise then a steadfast faith ; worship thy God ; give praise and glory to His name ; find joy in Him, and spend thyself in love. But thou also wert created *in the image of God* : an image how noble ! but now how unlike that first fashion ! Confess thy faults with sorrow and confusion of face. Consider how that image may be restored. As it was first produced, so may it be reproduced, by the knowledge of God, and oftentimes renewing of acts of faith ; since it is for lack of these that we too often fall.

2. *All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made. John i. 3.*

Consider : All things were created out of nothing, and are kept in being, by the power of the Word of God, without which they would relapse into nothingness. Acknowledge then with lively faith that thou and all things thus depend on God. Extol and praise His power. Bid all creatures join with thee, and hear them bid thee likewise. Marvel that so many creatures which God might have made have been left in that nothingness which is their own, and that thou,

a miserable sinner, hast been brought therefrom. Acknowledge how much thou mightest have done with His help, how little thou hast accomplished. Humble thyself, for that thou canst do nothing without Him. Grasp the almighty hand, wherewith thou canst do all things. Rouse thyself to meet with stout heart things arduous and difficult.

3. *That which hath been made was life in him.* John i. 3, 4 (R.V. margin).

Trace the path backward from the creatures to God. Consider how all created things have their being transcendently in God. Thou, too, therefore wast in the Word, and wast *life*. But dost thou live the Divine life in thy true self? What answer cometh from thy works, which are the sum of life? Herein wilt thou find matter for acts of thankfulness, of the praise of God, of love, of sorrow, of confusion and humility: matter also to rouse thee to confidence in Him.

MONDAY

OF THE CREATION AND CHIEF END OF MAN.

1. *God created man in his own image (and likeness).* Gen. i. 27.

Acknowledge thy Creator, His eternity in being, His omnipotence in creation, His goodness in the communication of Himself, His wisdom in the governance of the world, and the like. Praise and glorify thy Maker: He it is who brought thee from nothing, therefore thou art all His. But how often hast thou withdrawn thyself from thy Lord! "*Arise: return to his ownership, by sorrow, by love, by resignation,*" saith S. Leo. He set His image upon thee in creation. Give Him the thanks. But, saith S. Basil, "He hath left it to thee to *grow* into His

likeness." Compare thee with that first pattern : note well what thou lackest, that thou mayest be made like Him. Resolve to strain for that thou most dost lack. Beg for grace.

2. *God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.* Gen. ii. 7.

To a noble soul God joined a body of the dust of the ground, lest that nobility should move thee to pride, that lowliness to dejection. If then so noble, why stoop to things unworthy? If so lowly, why make thyself slave to thy body? Return to the way of wisdom : shew care for thy body, spoilt it not with indulgence : measure the offices thou doest for it by necessity, not by thy pleasure. Cast thyself away freely in humility, before that time thou must be cast away into the dust.

3. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* Matthew iv. 10.

This is the end for which thou wast created. Acknowledge *the Lord . . . thy . . . God*. These are His titles to the adoration and service of every faculty of mind and body which He hath granted thee. Every such faculty which thou hast received from God is bound to God. Consider, how little thou hast acknowledged this truth : for this cause thou hast misused thy faculties. Detest this foul misuse, and grieve thereon. Consider thy final end, at which thou aimest in the service of God. Give praise to God, who offereth Himself to thee for thy reward ; give thanks ; yearn for Him ; implore His grace.

TUESDAY

OF THE MEANS OF ATTAINING THIS THY CHIEF END.

1. *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* Gen. i. 1.

How vast that chain of being which serveth thine

ends! Part thereof is of nature: Heaven, all the elements with their perfections; mankind; the arts, the sciences, the natural virtues. Part is above nature: the mediation of Christ, with His merits; the Sacraments, Grace; the Saints and angels; the holy Scriptures; spiritual instruction; the religious life, and the like. Marvel that God hath done so great things for thee, despite thy ingratitude and rebelliousness. Praise God in all His works; acknowledge His love for thee. Think how great things He prepareth for thee in Heaven, who in thine exile maketh thee such gifts.

2. *Thou hast put all things under his feet.* Psalm viii. 6.

Consider how and with what affections God hath put these means in thy hands: the love, wherewith He rejoiceth to do thee good; the liberality wherewith He supplieth them beyond thy need to give thee joy; the providence whereby he disposeth all things in their seasons; the wisdom whereby he converteth to thy profit those very ills which seem to bar thy way; the patience for which He withdraweth not His hand from the ungrateful. Marvel: proclaim, extol His benefits: give thanks: bethink thee of thy little worth. Learn from thy Creator to shew thyself liberal towards Him, and constant in His service. Not yet, not yet hast thou so done; unthankful hast thou been. Sorrow, resolve thyself, and seek His grace.

3. *The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.* Romans i. 20.

Consider that the end of these means is that they should aid thee to attain the end of thy creation. There is aid in them for the body, nourishment, vesture, medicine, recreation; aid for the soul; thy fellows aid thee by their teaching, the sciences by

enlightening and perfecting thy intellect, the natural virtues by adorning thy will. Nay more, there is in them supernatural aid, that by them that mayest know the omnipotence, the wisdom, the providence, the goodness of God, and so be stirred to lofty thoughts of Him. Feel then confusion that thou hast till now made but so dull employ of them: be in fear of their accusing witness against thee at the Last Judgment. Yet offer thy thanks for them, and thy desire that this thy dullness may not deprive thee of them. Have hope in the goodness of God, and vow henceforth to use them according to the intent wherewith they are given unto thee.

WEDNESDAY

OF THE RIGHT USE OF CREATURES, AND OF INDIFFERENCE
TO THEM.

1. *And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.* Gen. i. 31.

All things from their first creation were means to thy true end so good and apt, that thou couldest find none better, though thou shouldest search the universe. Health then is good, and sickness; honour, and contempt; riches, and poverty; affliction, and consolation; and even so all else: it is the use of them that is left at thy discretion. How hast thou used them to this hour? For vanity: for thy senses: for thy ruin. Thou hast done injury to God, for thou hast wrenched His creatures unto evil: to the creatures themselves, for thou hast misused them for error and sins: to thyself, for by their means thou hast gone into perdition. Hast thou so erred? Then taste confusion, cry mercy, turn again: have confidence in God, implore His aid.

2. *Blessed is the man that hath set his hope in the Lord: and turned not unto the proud, and to such as go about with lies.* Psalm xl. 5.

Consider the practical method of the good use of the creatures. Thus it standeth : (1) That thou refer them *one by one* to God, and not to vanity. (2) That thou note well wherein *this* work or *this* may help or hinder thy final end. (3) That thou mark thine affections and chief desire in this thy work ; whether it be God thou seekest therein, or thyself, or the vanity of the proud, or the world that goeth about with lies. Bethink thee of the past, resolve thee for the time to come ; for thou art straitly bound to use the creatures only for thy final end. Engrave that truth upon thy heart right seriously.

3. *Turn not to the right hand nor to the left.*
Proverbs iv. 27.

Thou mayest not incline thine heart the more to health, wealth and honours than to sickness, poverty and contempt ; for these and those alike lead to thine end, that thou mayest know God, mayest praise Him, love Him, and the like. Balance thyself : whatever befall, direct it unto God. Now then drive from the citadel the inordinate love of thyself and of all created things. For that is the noose wherein to thy sorrow thou hast been too often caught ; yea, thou mayest be confounded, and shudder at the judgment of God that hangeth over thee. So then, thou wilt despise all pleasant ease, if it hinder thy attainment ; wilt love even the steep path, if it promote it ; wilt plan thy way ; wilt seek God's grace.

THURSDAY

OF THE FALL OF MAN.

1. *Man being in honour hath no understanding : but is compared unto the beasts that perish.*
Psalm xlix. 20.

It is a truth of the faith that our first parents, for

one sin of disobedience, were cast out of Paradise. Ponder thou first in what honour was man established in grace, free from interior rebellion, disease and pain, set in a place of delight. Acknowledge and bless the bounteousness of God. Ponder next the ingratitude of man, who preferred the eating of the forbidden fruit to God's so strict command. Compare it with thine own ingratitude and loathe the same. Bethink thee then of the penalty that followed: all bodily pains, diseases, rebellion of the passions, blinding of the mind, debasement of the will, and all the rest. Acknowledge the grievousness of sin, abhor, detest it.

2. *They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become abominable.* Psalm xiv. 4.

Consider that one sin passed upon all men, that all were robbed of grace, all poisoned with the original stain, made children of wrath, and hostile to God. And what is this? How grievous a thing to be robbed of grace, hateful in the eyes of God, and much besides! What hiding place may cover the sinner from the face of the wrath of God? Abhor thy sin, which passeth upon all thy actions, bereaving them of moral life, plunging thy soul in spiritual death.

3. *The wages of sin is death.* Romans vi. 23.

Death temporal, and death eternal. For through sin death entered into the world: through sin hell was fashioned. Hadst thou not sinned, thou wouldest have lived in everlasting happiness and blessedness eternal. Since thou hast sinned, thou shalt die with either death. Ponder the woes of each; the transitory, the eternal death. Acknowledge then the grievousness of sin: shudder thereat, be sorrowful, hold it in detestation, seek pardon, do all that in thee lies.

FRIDAY

OF THE DECREE FOR THE RESTORATION OF MAN AND THE MOTIVE THEREOF.

1. *I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, though made by sin a child of death eternal, but that the wicked turn from his way.* Ezekiel xxxiii. 11.

O piteous fall from the heights to so profound a depth! Behold whence thou art fallen: and whither. Reckon thy loss, thy danger, and thus contrast thy former happiness and this thy state of sin. Yet God hath no pleasure in thy death: *I have no pleasure* in the sinner's death. Ah, if thou heardest the reprieving word on thy very way to expiate an earthly crime, what exulting were thine, what cries of gratitude! what service too arduous for thee to vow for the goodness of thy Prince! Even so repay thy God.

2. *I have loved thee with an everlasting love.* Jeremiah xxxi. 3.

Consider that the unmeasured love of God is the cause of this His goodwill towards us. What measure is there to the effect of love even on God Himself? Did we then deserve that love? Nay, verily, *while we were yet sinners*, He loved us. What wouldest thou do to thine enemy? *Thy debt was greater far.* Yet God, He whom thou hadst wronged, *loved thee.* O heart of iron, if thou renderest not love for the love of Him that loved thee while thou didst him wrong!

3. *With loving-kindness have I drawn thee.* Jeremiah xxxi. 3.

The second reason for the decree for the restoration of man is the Divine pity. Adam had sinned, had injured all. We, all his seed, were under sentence to be rooted out. But it was not the will of God that the whole human race should be frustrated of its true

end. Yea, Adam had sinned, but it was by instigation of the fiend, raging against God. God then would make man's cause His own. Hope thou in God ; and when the fiend trieth thee, God will make thy cause His own.

SATURDAY

THE DECREE FOR THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

1. Consider that it was within the power of God to restore mankind by an infinity of other methods : *He chose* this way—a worthy satisfaction to be given to Himself. No creature that was not also God could offer this : for the injury was infinite, and any creaturely satisfaction can be but finite. Deduce the grievousness of our offence against God : recoil in horror. Did He demand satisfaction from thee, whence couldest thou pay?

2. Consider that it was within the power of God to unite Himself to the nature of the angels, and so make satisfaction for mankind. *He chose* rather human nature, that in the feebler frame He might subdue the devil, and give us a Redeemer we might see, might imitate. Acknowledge that man united to God may with ease overcome the fiend : cleave to God that thou mayest shame that strong one. Acknowledge thy Redeemer as thy Master, thine Example. Was this beyond thy hope? See that thou err not from His ways.

3. Consider the vileness and misery from which mankind is saved : the dignity whereunto it is raised. Mark it well : rejoice with God in love and thankfulness. So then, thou sharest the Divine Nature :

so then, thy life should have matched this thy dignity. Alas! alas! what hast thou done? Shame on thee, woe is thee, degenerate!

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

THE FATHER'S GIFT TO THE WORLD : HIS SON.
THE SON'S GIFT : HIMSELF.

1. *God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son.* John iii. 16.

Who is the Lover? *Who* the beloved? *God* and *thyself*. *How* plighted He His love? He gave His Son, the Divine Son, beloved with boundless love : He gave this Son for thee, the sinner, the rebel. What renderest thou to Him? *Nothing!* Shame on thee! Canst thou not put away the love of the creatures and thyself, and give thyself to Him who gave His Son for thee? Mark well thine obligation so to do.

2. *Who loved me, and gave himself for me.* Galatians ii. 20.

He saw me as I am : foreknew my ingratitude, my struggling against His will for me : yet *me* He loved ; and for love's token gave Himself, heedless of every argument that might restrain His bounty. What doest thou to answer this His love? Will He save thee yet, if thou wilt yet resist? He gave Himself, all, to thee : give thyself, all, to Him.

3. *Who, being in the form of God . . . made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.* Philippians ii. 6, 7.

Whereunto gave He Himself, who gave Himself to thee? To poverty, to contempt, to torture, to death : all bearable, because He loved. If thou wilt none of these, thou givest back no love. Resolve thyself to them : so prove thy love.

MONDAY

THE OUTSHINING OF GOD'S WISDOM, GRACIOUSNESS,
OMNIPOTENCE, IN THE INCARNATION.

1. *Thou . . . shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly.* Psalm li. 6.

God found the only means by which His justice could be satisfied, the transferring of our debt to a Person of the Godhead. He found a way whereby the Creator might be Redeemer too, and multiply His titles to all our love. Yet thou defraudest Him of that He looks for, sharing out thy love among the creatures. Ah, pay thy debt to God.

2. *Thou hast dealt graciously with thy servant.* Psalm cxix. 65.

Graciously indeed! He gave Himself, the Just for the unjust, the Master for the servant, God for man, joining Himself to him by bond of substance, not of love alone. Believing this, canst thou yet love aught apart from God? O my soul, convert thyself wholly unto God, who alone is gracious and worthy of thy love.

3. *He hath shewed strength with his arm.* Luke i. 51.

God's Son is God's Arm, stretched forth from heaven to raise mankind. In the Son of God, omnipotence appeared incarnate, achieving the uttermost of love's desire. No more than this could love itself command: no further could omnipotent obedience go. Let the truth hereof persuade thee to render Him that love thou hast denied Him until now, and prove it with all thy might.

TUESDAY

BY THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD, GOD IS
RECONCILED, MAN IS RAISED UP, THE FIEND IS PUT TO
CONFUSION.

1. *All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.* 2 Corinthians v. 18.

God offended can be placated only by condonation of the fault or by satisfaction. He would not condone our sin : He willed that satisfaction should be made for it, by our nature aided by union with the Word, whereby its merits might be raised to the point of infinity. O my soul, fear : for from thee too will satisfaction be demanded. How seldom dost thou think thereon ! But, since thou canst not give it, unite thy nothingness with the infinite treasure of the merits of Christ.

2. *He taketh up the simple out of the dust : and lifteth the poor out of the mire.* Psalm cxiii. 6.

Man lay in the dust, in mind and heart, seeing not God, nor loving Him, for that He might not be discerned by sense. He therefore gave Himself in visible form, to raise us to Himself by example and by teaching. Ah then, shall things of earth prevail to drag thee to themselves ? Shall it be *their* path and *their* attraction, or that of the Son of God ?

3. *Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.* John xii. 31.

The fiend was in triumph, for that in one man he had ruined all mankind. God found one Man, by whom his pride should be brought low, even Christ, God and Man. So one man ruined us, One saved us. But this did not humanity achieve, until united with the Godhead. Thou too wilt never vanquish thine enemy, unless thou be united with God. By thyself thou canst do nought ; but with Him all things.

WEDNESDAY

THE CHOICE OF A MOTHER WORTHY OF SO GREAT A SON.

1. *God sent forth his Son, made of a woman.* Galatians iv. 4.

God, having decreed the Incarnation, decreed further that He would not create a body for Himself,

but be born of a woman, that as one woman had part in our perdition, one might aid the work of our redemption. So He chose to be made the Son of Man, our Brother. What dignity is ours, to have Christ's Father for our own! Acknowledge this, and prove it by thy deeds. What lowliness was His, the Son of God by His own will to be made Son of Man! Emulate this, and bring thyself low.

2. *He hath regarded the lowliness of his hand-maiden.* Luke i. 48.

From eternity God beheld every woman that should be, and every act each would have done in every circumstance. He beheld the Blessed Virgin. He saw that she in every case, by the merits of Christ, would do all things well. Therefore beyond all others He set His love on her. Wilt thou be loved by God? Co-operate with His grace: let no occasion pass thee by. Hast thou so done hitherto? Nay then, accept confusion of face, and sorrow, and fear. Resolve thyself as God may shew His will.

3. *He that is mighty hath done to me great things.* Luke i. 49.

What greater thing could befall than to be Mother of God? How fell this lot to her? by her unfailing correspondence with the suggestions of grace, and its intimations of the will of God. But thou, even thou, canst be God's Mother: *for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my . . . Mother.* Wouldest thou have this dignity? Do thou then His will, correspond with His suggestions within thy soul.

THURSDAY

THE PROMISE OF THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

1. *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* Gen. iii. 15.

Such was the promise of a Redeemer, to free Adam

and his seed from the power of the fiend. How good is God! scarce hath man sinned, and lo, He provideth and offereth him the hope of grace. Hath He not provided this same hope for thee? Yea, many times. What gratitude dost thou then owe to Him! what love! what confidence!

2. *Between thy seed and her seed.* Gen. iii. 15.

Such was the promise that the Redeemer should come from the posterity of Adam: the promise afterward renewed through many prophecies and many figures, that the children of Adam might not lack this self-same hope. But thee He hath not left to hope for the coming, but hath granted thee to see it with thine eyes. Yet they who could but hope yielded Him better service than thou who dost enjoy. Accept thy shame and confusion, and henceforth make better response to thy so great blessings.

3. *Israel shall be saved in the Lord.* Isaiah xlv. 17

So trusted and so spake the earlier age. So to our fathers did Christ extend His merits (for they were infinite). So then He never faileth any that setteth his hope in Him. And thinkest thou that He will shew Himself less merciful to thee, *after* His coming, if thou serve Him faithfully? By sacraments and all the means of grace thou partakest more richly in His merits. Be these singular benefits the foundation of thy hope.

FRIDAY

THE DESIRE OF PATRIARCHS AND PROPHETS FOR THE REDEEMER.

1. *Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness.* Isaiah xlv. 8.

It was the will of God that the promised Saviour should be *desired*, that we on our part might be disposed for His appearance. What less indeed could He demand for so supreme a boon than such desire?

Lo, to thee also God willeth to come. Thou knowest too well the burning of desire for other things : alas, how lukewarm thy desire for Him ! God willeth to be desired of thee, in that He willeth to be united to thee. Away then with all other desires, that thou mayest stir up the desire for Him.

2. *Send . . . by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.* Exodus iv. 13.

Consider how ardent was the Patriarchs' desire. Day and night they invoked heavens, skies and earth that He who should be sent might come. The fruit of such longing was a speeding of the Incarnation. If thou take note of the languor of thy desires, thou wilt have no complaint that thou art not heard. Shame on thee, that thy desires for heavenly things are so lukewarm, while thou burnest for what will satisfy thy senses ! What hindereth these heavenly desires ? What but thine attachment to the things of earth ?

3. *We have waited for him, and he will save us.* Isaiah xxv. 9.

The ages were passing, and miseries increased : the promised One came not. Yet, sure in hope, the living and the souls in Limbo waited for Him, knowing both their own necessities, and the greatness of the promised blessing. Thou too wouldest be more faithful in desire, if thou didst trust in God, if thou didst take heed of thy necessities, if thou didst know the greatness of the blessing of having God for thine own. Even so foster thy desire.

SATURDAY

OF THE FAITH OF THE INCARNATION.

1. *We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write.* John i. 45.

This is He that the Father had heralded aforetime by the mouth of the prophets since the world began,

He that should be sent, according to the promise, no mere man, but Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. This He that through the ages was the expectation of the people of Israel, the Rock of which all our fathers drank that spiritual drink, sanctified through faith in His appearing. O that thou too with them mightest confess Him! for not unto themselves but unto thee they ministered these glorious things. From thee then God seeketh a greater faith, a deeper love, a more ardent desire.

2. *Though ye believe not me, believe the works.*
John x. 38.

Jesus was wont to draw the proof of His Godhead not from the Scriptures alone, but from His mighty works. He commanded the winds and the sea, He foretold things to come, He healed the sick, He raised the dead, He revealed men's hearts. In death how mighty His works, the quaking earth, the rending rocks, heaven moved and harrowed hell, and, crowning token of Divinity, His glorious Resurrection! Death, life, men, angels, nature, all confessed Him God. It is thine to make the like confession: why then so sluggish to propagate and advance this faith?

3. *The mystery of godliness; which was . . . preached among the nations, believed on in the world.* 1 Timothy iii. 16 (R.V. margin).

The dispersion of the people of the Jews, the ruins of the Temple and city of Jerusalem proclaim Him God. For this truth an innumerable multitude hesitated not to lay down life itself: the nations renounced their errors, brake their idols, threw down their temples, and received the Gospel. In all lands men and women of every state and age confess this truth, adoring Jesus as Lord, offering to Him praise and penitence and sacrifice. And what adoration hast *thou* brought thy Lord and God?

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

OF THE BLESSINGS OF THE INCARNATION.

1. *God so loved the world.* John iii. 16.

That He surrendered, what? His dearest possession. To whom? The undeserving, the unworthy. How? By a crowning miracle. To what fate? Tortures and death. The very words unfold the love of God. So burneth the Heart of God : and is man's frozen still? God loved thee, His enemy, and can there be in thee no love responsive for God, thy benefactor? If thou canst not as thou oughtest, then do what thou canst.

2. *That he gave his only-begotten Son.* John iii. 16.

From this munificence measure the height of the Divine charity. The All-Mighty could give no more; the All-wise knew not what more might be given; the All-rich had no more to give (S. Augustine). Ah, the Divine liberality towards thee! ah, the parsimony of thy few, vile offerings!

3. *That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* John iii. 16.

The words reveal the richness of the benefits poured upon us through the Incarnation. Such benefits are infinite. *Should not perish*: we are delivered from evils infinite: *but have everlasting life*: infinite blessings are heaped upon us. From how dread punishment hath the Son of God delivered thee! Not only hath He saved from the curse, but hath given thee heavenly beatitude. Ungrateful heart! He looketh for no return, except thy love.

MONDAY

THE ESPOUSAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN TO S. JOSEPH.

1. God willed that she who should be His Mother

should be espoused. The Virgin refused not, nor trembled for her vow; for she committed herself entirely to the governance of God. She doubted not that He whose will she followed would preserve her chastity. Submit thyself to the governance of God, and thou wilt run into no danger. Examine the past: dispose the future.

2. Consider the reasons for her espousal. (1) Lest, great with child, she might bear blame among men. Consider the fair name of others, and specially of *thy* Mother, holy Church. (2) Lest the Divine Son, were He born out of wedlock, might be held a child of shame. Consider even thine own repute, when God's glory so demandeth. (3) That the Mystery of the Incarnation might for a time be hidden. Learn to hide the fruits of thine own virtues.

3. Consider the qualities of her spouse. Of the seed royal, yet a poor carpenter. A just man withal, himself a virgin, that virgin honour might be guarded by virginity. Ah, the difference between Divine and worldly judgments! God's approval resteth on holiness, virginity, humility: the world's on lofty birth, and riches. Hadst thou in thine actions concurred with the judgments of God, thou wouldest not have been snared so fast in things of earth. *Now* at last correct thy judgments by His.

TUESDAY

THE SENDING OF THE ANGEL TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

1. *The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee . . . to a virgin.* Luke i. 26, 27.

Consider the Sender, the Messenger, the Receiver. God sendeth His angel to a poor virgin, espoused to a carpenter, dedicated to Himself. Such are they

whom God deemeth worthy of angelic ambassage. Yet doth He deign to send to thee the unseen ambassage of interior inspirations. Attend to them, for they are from God : mark them and follow where they lead, for they are for thy profit. Better for thee hadst so done ere this !

2. *And he came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art endued with grace.* Luke i. 28 (R.V. margin).

He came in, with what reverence, humility, recollection ! With how much less dost thou enter the presence of God Himself ! He does honour to the Virgin, but saith naught of His own angelic state. Learn then to utter others' praises, not thine own. He hailed her endued with grace. Such is the sole praise before God. With what art thou endued ? With vanity, inordinate affections.

3. *The Lord is with thee.* Luke i. 28.

In thought, in desire, in love. O blessed companionship so to be with God ! O blessed Mary, to be ever with God ! How seldom art thou with God ! Bethink thee of thy thoughts, thy desires, thine affections. Whither wander they ? Gather them together, and direct them unto God.

WEDNESDAY

THE ANGEL DISCLOSETH THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION.

1. *When she saw him, she was troubled at his saying.* Luke i. 29.

She is *troubled*, ashamed, to hear the angel's praise so high, to see his reverence so deep. So is it with the humble. How unlike the Virgin's mind is thine ! Thou art troubled to hear thyself blamed : praise moveth thee to exultation. She shrinketh from that true praise, which is her due : thou seekest the false thou hast not earned.

2. *Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.* Luke i. 30.

He confronteth her with the one true cause for having done with fear: she is in favour with God. This is the shield of sure defence. What need God's loved one fear? Seek not to please men, but God. Thou wouldest be more pleasing to Him, hadst thou cared to please them less.

3. *Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: . . . and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever.* Luke i. 31—33.

Joy with the Virgin in her glorious Son. Adore that Son, salute His Deity. Hail Him in faith and love: bow thee before His throne.

THURSDAY

THE ANGEL UNFOLDETH THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION.

1. *Then said Mary . . . How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?* Luke i. 34.

She saith not, *This shall not be*, consenting, as ever, to the mind of God: but, *How?* Casting not away her love of chastity, she disposeth herself for the rest to hear what God ordaineth. Set thy heart on more entire chastity of mind and body than thou hast yet attained.

2. *And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.* Luke i. 35.

He unfoldeth how the power of the Holy Ghost will fashion a body for the Word of God, bestowing fruitfulness upon the virgin womb. Joy thou with that Virgin, in whom the Holy Ghost enacted this

most holy mystery. See to it, that He alone act in thy heart by holy inspiration; not sense, not love of self, nor fear of man.

3. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word.* Luke i. 38.

The Virgin consenteth. For this consent waited the most Holy Trinity, the angels, all mankind. Mark her humility. The Mother of God calleth herself handmaid. In her virginity conceiving, by humility she merited that grace. See how thou drawest God to theeward, if thou stoopest low: even as thou drivest Him from thee, if thou art lifted up.

FRIDAY

THE ENDOWMENT OF THE HUMAN SOUL OF CHRIST,
TAKEN BY THE WORD.

1. *In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* Colossians ii. 3.

In that first instant the Soul of Christ had perfect knowledge: (1) Of all things natural, yea of thee, and all thou doest. Saw He what could bring Him joy, or pain? (2) Of all things above nature, yea of God. Blessed that Soul of Christ: unhappy thou, who seest not the things of heaven. Yet exercise more oft thy *faith* in them: deficiency of faith is root of divers failures.

2. *Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled.* Hebrews vii. 26.

(1) By union with the Word, the Soul of Christ was holy beyond measure or power of increase. Thou mayest increase in holiness, but shalt not, unless thou be closer united unto God: nor shall such union be thine, unless thou keep more distant from the creatures. (2) By most plenteous grace, the Soul of Christ was holy beyond all other creatures. Consider thine own poverty. Richer wouldest thou be, wert

thou closer united unto God. (3) The Soul of Christ was governed by the Word, and so impeccable. How fragile thine estate! It is because thou sufferest not thyself to be God-governed?

3. *It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.* Colossians i. 19.

Because of the union, His Soul had all supernatural virtues, whereof it was capable. How great the pleasure of the Father in that Soul! How little in thine, poor and needy that thou art! Nor were those virtues inactive: even from the first they began to flow to usward. Ah, but how often hast thou dammed their flow!

SATURDAY

IN THE FIRST MOMENT OF HIS CONCEPTION, CHRIST
OFFERETH HIMSELF TO THE ETERNAL FATHER.

1. *When he cometh into the world, he saith, (Other) sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. . . . Then said I, Lo, I come.* Hebrews x. 5, 7.

He offereth to the Father Himself and all He hath, and that right promptly: knowing that all cometh from Him. What hast thou that cometh not from God? Why offerest thou not all to Him? Why so many oblations to thyself, and thine own senses?

2. *Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O God.* Hebrews x. 7.

Straightway He beheld, decreed for Him by God, poverty, contempt, suffering, death: in that first moment right promptly He accepteth the Cross, transfusing His whole human will with the Divine. Compare thyself with Christ: what of thy conformity with the will of God, and chiefly in things arduous? What of thy love, or shunning, of the Cross?

3. *I do always those things that please him.*
John viii. 29.

Straightway He maketh God's glory, our salvation, His single aim and pure intention, since these be the things that most entirely please the Father. All that thou aimest not hereunto is lost endeavour. Alas! the waste thou hast made until now! Henceforth in all thy deeds keep thine aim pure from all desires of sense.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

THE BLESSED VIRGIN VISITETH ELIZABETH.

1. *Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste.* Luke i. 39.

Straight from the Conception of God, she seeketh arduous ways: for it is a token of God's indwelling that one resolve to endure hardness. Straight from the Conception of God, she goeth forth abroad: till thou receive God's Spirit, thou must remain apart: thou mayest not safely have dealings with thy neighbour. That John may be sanctified, she relinquisheth her well-loved solitude. Yea, for God's sake we must relinquish God.

2. *The babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.* Luke i. 41.

Behold the effects of Mary's Visitation: the Babe is made clean, and sanctified: unborn he prophesieth, leaping in the womb. Elizabeth is enlightened, hailleth Mary for Mother of God, extolleth her, and humbleth herself. God willeth us to receive all good things by Mary's prayers. Tell her thy needs, and beg her suffrages.

3. *My soul doth magnify the Lord.* Luke i. 46.

The praise she hath gotten for herself she poureth back to God, and claimeth for herself a low estate.

What grace soever floweth to thee from God, get thee back to thine own nothingness: magnify Him, lift up thy heart to view His loftiness.

MONDAY

S. JOSEPH IS INSTRUCTED CONCERNING THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION.

1. *Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. Matthew i. 19.*

He seeth her with child, knowing not the mystery thereof. He is distressed, yet upbraideth her not, and seeketh to interpret in all charity. He thinketh to put her away, yet privily, lest he should wound her fame. Learn thou: (1) To bear adversity with prudence, and without murmuring. (2) To excuse the faults of others in thine own mind, and cover them from sight.

2. The Virgin was likewise in distress: she knew the distress of Joseph, the suspicion of adultery, the danger of being put away. Yet she is silent, and maketh no excuse: she committeth herself to God, the Defender of the innocent. Even the Saints fall into ill repute. Keep silence, if it thus fall out to thee. Commit thyself to God, who in His providence will make all work for good.

3. *The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary. Matthew i. 20.*

God willeth the just to be afflicted, but not destroyed: when human succour faileth, He provideth it from heaven. He sheweth unto Joseph the mystery of the Incarnation. How great the joy of Joseph and of Mary! Even so God careth for them that commit themselves to Him.

TUESDAY

JOHN THE BAPTIST IS BORN.

1. *She brought forth a son. And her neighbours . . . heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her.* Luke i. 57, 58.

(1) By taking away the reproach of barrenness. And if barrenness of the body was a reproach, how great a reproach before God will be barrenness of soul! And that is thine. (2) By giving her a son, who *shall be great in the sight of the Lord.* Such is the one true greatness: wherefore seekest thou another?

2. *She brought forth a son. And her neighbours and her cousins heard that the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her.* Luke i. 57, 58.

Consider all that followeth the birth of John. The neighbours rejoice: some fear: some marvel: his father's mouth is opened: he is filled with the Holy Ghost: he speaketh, praiseth God, and prophesieth: and much beside. How great a change is wrought by one man of zeal, when he sheweth himself among the people!

3. *What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him.* Luke i. 66.

The hand and the grace of God were with John, presaging for them that heard of them the greatness already foretold by the angel. Yet this grace made him not great, but despised, in the sight of the world. It brought him into the wilderness, fed him with locusts, clothed him with camel's hair, and the like. Such the path by which God leadeth them that He will have great in His sight: the path that thou must tread.

WEDNESDAY

THE WORK WHICH JOHN IS DESTINED TO DO.

1. *The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light.* John i. 7.

Witness in word, that he might proclaim Christ : witness in deed, that he might seal his teaching with his blood. Such is thy vocation, to bear *witness*, not by word alone, by praise and proclamation ; but much more in deed, by arduous work and patient suffering. What hast thou done, what suffered? What of the time to come?

2. *He shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias.* Luke i. 17.

The spirit of Elias was full of zeal and fire, valiant and undismayed. Such was John, in the desert, by Jordan, in the city, in prison, and in death. Is thy spirit such as his? Ah, how lukewarm! how feeble! how soon weary!

3. *To make ready a people prepared for the Lord.* Luke i. 17.

His destiny is not to deal with Herod alone, or the great, but with the *people*. Bring thyself down to the vilest, since no man's *soul* is vile. There is but one price for souls, the Blood of Christ. And His example, thy vocation, alike demand such lowliness.

THURSDAY

THE EXPECTATION OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

1. The Blessed Virgin longed ardently to bring forth Him she had conceived ; knowing Him given for the salvation of the world, she would have Him openly begin His work. She longed indeed to keep Him united to herself within the womb : but stronger was her will for the world's salvation. How often dost thou conceive God by good resolves! How rarely bringest Him to birth! Thou must labour with such resolves ; else they will be abortive. Set aside sometimes even thy spiritual consolations (much more

the solace of thy senses) that thou mayest make thyself the servant of others' salvation. This is not to lose God, but to bring Him forth.

2. When the Blessed Virgin knew it was God's will that Christ should be born, she longed to bring Him forth, that she might pay Him court with offices of body as of soul, might see Him with her eyes, might kiss, embrace, and serve. So be not thou content with inward feeling, but pay thine outward duty unto God.

3. How did she dispose herself unto this birth? By exercise the most intense of every virtue. And thou wilt not dispose thyself for a Divine birth within thee, by sluggish exercise of one virtue only. Thou needest all, and in the heroic degree. What virtues hast thou then? What are lacking yet? Accustom thyself to such heroic exercise, which calleth for fervour and constancy in resolution.

FRIDAY

THE BLESSINGS BROUGHT BY CHRIST TO HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER BY HIS SOJOURN IN HER WOMB.

1. She carried her Son within her body, yet felt no weight, no sorrow, and no weariness. That which we deeply love we bear with ease. Such was the Virgin's privilege: but not thine. For thee it is written, *In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children* (Genesis iii. 16); that is to say, thy resolves must be carried into act through labour. But they will be made easier if thou lovest. Findest thou Christ's precepts grievous? Love Him then: love sweeteneth every task.

2. Consider the adornment Christ left to His resting-place in Mary's womb. Great were the graces which

He bestowed in the first moment of conception : but how much more must He have heaped them on her through that nine months' sojourn ! What light poured forth upon her mind, what love into her will ! Joy with the Virgin. But whence thy blindness, thy lukewarmness, when so often thou receivest God ? Perchance they are because thou sufferest Him not to abide with thee, hastening to squander thine affection on other things.

3. Consider that other sons draw noble rank from their mothers. But here the Mother from the Son. She is Queen of all because she is the Mother of the King of all the world. Thou too shalt draw nobility from that thou givest birth unto : that is from actions conformed to Christ, not from thine own precepts, nor from thy good repute.

SATURDAY

THE VIRGIN'S JOURNEY UNTO BETHLEHEM.

1. *There went out a decree from Cæsar.*
Luke ii. 1.

This decree proceeded from pride and avarice ; yet the Blessed Virgin revereth the Divine authority in the earthly Emperor. She maketh no excuse of burdened womb, or wintry bitterness. Mayest thou not learn hereby to count thy superiors in the place of God, even though they lay on thee some stern command ?

2. *Joseph also went up . . . to be taxed with Mary.*
Luke ii. 4, 5.

God had decreed that His Son should be born in poverty and low esteem. He ordained that Cæsar's decree shall go forth. Thus seemed it as though He

were constrained to make the journey unto Bethlehem. But under this seeming of necessity He covereth His own will to suffer, His humility, His patience, His poverty. What of myself? I make my way under fair shew of virtue, while I yet conceal my faults: I love my convenience, my comforts. O the shame!

3. *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.* John i. 11.

Accompany in thought the Blessed Virgin seeking hospitality from place to place. See with what indignity she is shut out. Ponder her emotion; most of all to see how *his own receive him not*, while they receive so many strangers. And dost not thou shut out thy God, who knocketh oft-times at thy heart? And to what thoughts givest thou entertainment? Ah, henceforth open the door to Him, and close it to these vanities.

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

1. *And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.* Luke ii. 6.

Where? Consider well the lowly place, the winter's cold, the dark of night, how there lacked naught of misery or want. Wilt thou have Christ born in thee? Be lowly in thine own eyes, cast chill upon thy passions, seek for obscurity, be poor, be humble. Be sure the Son of God doth love in thee what He chose for Himself.

2. *And she brought forth her first-born son.* Luke ii. 7.

Consider with what exercise of reverence, of humility, of adoration, of love, the Blessed Virgin received her Son, and straightway offered Him to the Father for the salvation of the world. List to the

wailing, see the tears: Why weepest Thou? Hear Him make answer: "There is none to follow Me." Resolve that *thou* wilt follow.

3. *And wrapped him in swaddling clothes:* ah, the poverty of Mother and of Son! *And laid him in a manger:* see how God's Son from earlier infancy will have no ease. *Because there was no room for Him in the inn.* Luke ii. 7.

He that seeketh thy ruin hath found room in thee: not so He that formed thee for an habitation for Himself.

DECEMBER 26

THE INNER THOUGHT OF GOD, OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN,
OF THE ANGELS, AT THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST.

1. (1) Hear the Eternal Father say to thee at this very moment of the Nativity: *This is my beloved Son, In whom I am well pleased.* Matthew xvii. 5. (2) Think how He giveth thee that Son and all His merit. How rich the boon will make thee, if thou wilt but make good use thereof, and fold it to thy breast! (3) The Son offereth Himself to the Father as sacrifice for thy sins. What love is that for thee! And how hast thou deserved that love? Offer thyself a sacrifice to God.

2. Consider: (1) What thanks the Blessed Virgin rendered for the treasure of her undefiled virginity. Value and guard that chastity, which she so highly prized. (2) How she offered Him to the Eternal Father, to the world, to thee. Ah, take Him to thyself, love, cherish, make good use of Him.

3. Consider the shewing of Him to the angels, and those words: *And let all the angels of God worship*

him. Hebrews i. 6. We are to believe then that the angels were near, marvelling at the humiliation, the poverty and the like. Yet not for their sake, but for thine, the acts of Christ. How art thou then bound, not to marvel only at this humiliation, but to imitate!

DECEMBER 27

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST TO THE SHEPHERDS.

1. *There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them.* Luke ii. 8, 9.

To whom doth Christ reveal Himself? To the simple, lowly *shepherds; keeping watch*, for good opportunity, *over their flock*, and likewise over the herd of their own affections and lusts. Art thou thus humble and watchful, that God may deem thee worthy of His revelation of Himself?

2. *And the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.* Luke ii. 9.

Celestial light and recognition of the Divine Majesty rouseth in the heart an awe and reverence. How slight thy reverence towards God in spiritual exercises! How cometh this? Even because there is but little light in thee, and all too mean appraisement of God and things Divine. Think of Him as thou oughtest, and reverence will follow.

3. *I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day . . . a Saviour.* Luke ii. 10, 11.

Angels take joy in the good which is ours. Learn thou to rejoice in others' good. Their tidings are of *great joy: for a Saviour is born . . . unto us . . . this day*. He is thy Saviour, but will not save thee despite thyself: thou must co-operate.

DECEMBER 28

THE SIGN TO THE SHEPHERDS, AND THE ANGELS' SONG.

1. *And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.* Luke ii. 12.

Such be the lowly signs of Him the angel heraldeth as Saviour of all nations! So true it is, God is not found but in humbleness and contempt of earthly things. Make choice of lowliness to follow Christ the nearer, yea, though God's glory were as well served every whit, in luxury and lofty station.

2. *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God.* Luke ii. 13.

Because the Son of God hath humbled Himself thus deeply, therefore the Father doeth Him honour through the angels. The less concern thou hast for thyself, the more will God have for thee. Cast away the consolations of earth, and those of heaven will be thine. What were the angels praising? The wisdom of an Infant, the power of a Child, the glory of One despised. God bringeth forth to light the things that are hidden: trust thyself to Him.

3. *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.* Luke ii. 14 (Vulgate).

(1) Glory is due to God alone in all things, not to thyself. If thou claim it for thyself, God will put thee to confusion for thy theft. How often hast thou filched from God His glory! Restore what is not thine. (2) Peace is given to men of good will. A good will, rightly built on unshaken truths, prompt, resolute, and fervent, is the beginning of all good, and of interior peace. Consider with thyself, and thou wilt find this true. So then thou must stir up thy will to goodness and steadfastly maintain the same.

DECEMBER 29

THE SHEPHERDS ENCOURAGE EACH THE OTHER TO
VISIT THE SAVIOUR.

1. *As the angels were gone away from them . . . the shepherds said one to another.* Luke ii. 15.

They spake of the theme of the angels' song, nor suffered the departure of the heavenly messenger to cast oblivion on his message. But thou, when once thine hour of meditation hath passed, givest scarce one thought thereafter to the light thou hast had, the resolutions thou hast made. Thou shouldest speak to thyself of these oftentimes, when thou mayest put them into practice.

2. *Let us now go even unto Bethlehem.* Luke ii. 15.

Nor was it but a barren remembrance of that they had heard, but one that moved them unto action: *Let us go* was the fruit of this remembrance. Take heed that the end of thy communing with thyself in meditation be ever such as will move thee unto action: from imperfection *let me go* on to virtue: in virtue *let me go from strength to strength.*

3. *And see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.* Luke ii. 15.

They will make trial of that they have heard. How great the things which God maketh known to thee, when He speaketh to thy soul! Of these thou must make trial; else is God frustrated of His object, thou of thy destined fruit. Hadst thou so done, how great were now thy spiritual stature! Thou hast been but a hindrance to thyself: now be thou thine own spur.

DECEMBER 30

THE SHEPHERDS COME UNTO THE MANGER OF THE LORD.

1. *And they came with haste.* Luke ii. 16.

The angel had given no such command: yet they

knew well that God would approve their journey : they came therefore with haste that matched their deep desire to see. When thou hast drawn light from the well of life, when thou hast made thy resolution, thou must hasten, and take the first occasion. This thou wilt surely do, if thou hast a true desire. In thy meditation therefore ever kindle thy desire.

2. *And found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.* Luke ii. 16.

Represent to thyself the emotion of their hearts : submission, wonder, praise, joy, and the like. The event answered to the light of the angel's revelation, for that they hastened to make trial of the same. Make haste then to the work thou hast resolved : so shalt thou find Jesus, or His power. Why hast thou not done so hitherto?

3. *And when they had seen it they had knowledge of the saying which was told them concerning this child.* Luke ii. 17 (Vulgate).

It had been told them : but their knowledge was not yet full. They saw : *then* they had knowledge. Virtue is learned by experience. Hast thou heard God speak to thee in thy meditation? That is the beginning of this knowledge. To the work ! then shalt thy knowledge be fulfilled. Herein is thy failure : hence thy raw inexperience.

DECEMBER 31

THE RETURN OF THE SHEPHERDS FROM THE MANGER OF THE LORD.

1. *But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.* Luke ii. 19.

Here thou hast Mary for the model of thy meditation. (1) *She kept these things*, spoken by the shepherds in praise of Christ. How much keepest thou of what God saith to thee? (2) *All*. Wherefore

carriest thou not into act all the lights which God hath given thee? (3) *And pondered them in her heart.* Thou must recall them more often to thy memory, and seize the occasion to make thy purpose good.

2. *The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God.* Luke ii. 20.

From their encounter with Christ there remained a deep sense of the glory of God, which they brought back within them to their duty. Happy thou if from thy meditation thou bring back such feelings, and exercise them in thy daily tasks! Unhappy, if thou do not so, for then how great thy loss!

3. *For all the things that they had heard and seen.* Luke ii. 20.

They glorify God for *all* these things. Pass by no occasion for exercise of that wherein thou hast been enlightened. Many such occasions wilt thou find, to thy great gain, if thou but seek them: but many shalt thou miss, and to thy loss, if thou seek not. Thus shalt thou give glory to God, by doing that which He hath laid on thee.

JANUARY I

OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE LORD.

1. *When eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child.* Luke ii. 21.

Christ was exempt from the law of circumcision, since He had no sin to be done away thereby. Yet He willeth to be subject to it, grievous though it be. But thou so lightly dost transgress the lightest laws: and the heavy burdens thou avoidest. Callest thou this the imitation of Christ? Resolve thyself to arduous duties, when thou seest that God willeth so.

2. *For the circumcising of the child.* Luke ii. 21.

Consider how the Blessed Virgin, taught of God, resolved that her Son should be subjected to circumcision. Most tenderly she loved Him, and well she knew the pain that He must suffer. Yet yieldeth she no place to her affection, knowing the will of God. When God's will is plain, make no account of affection. What! will thy neighbour be offended? But it is God's command. Unto which wilt thou give heed? How hath it been till now?

3. *For the circumcising of the child.* Luke ii. 21.

Consider the pain suffered by Christ, a tender Infant, in the so delicate texture of His Flesh. This in His perfect use of human reason He foresaw, yet none the less willed to be obedient to the law. How unlike my Jesus am I! When I foresee some little confusion or pain, how fast and far I flee! Not so from this day forth! Nay rather I will seek for it, that I may imitate Jesus the more closely.

JANUARY 2

THE MOTIVES OF CHRIST IN HIS CIRCUMCISION.

1. Consider that His first motive was to prove that He had taken a true Body, and no phantasm: that He was man like unto us, and subject to pain. Bless thou His name, adore that very flesh. But learn not to be satisfied with phantasm and outward shew of virtue: seek the reality thereof. This thou must prove by circumcision, which is mortification.

2. The second motive was to declare Himself a Son of Abraham, who received the law of circumcision. Thus He shrank not from the pain and shame thereof. Art thou called religious? Thou art not such, unless thou provest it by mortification; if fear

of pain or shame keepeth thee from what becometh thy profession. But henceforth thou wilt not so act.

3. The third motive was that in His early infancy He might testify His love for us. For it is the very gage of love to suffer for thy beloved. And what is thine answering love to God? Dost thou suffer aught for Him? Hast thou a ready will, nay a longing, for the arduous way? Dost receive such opportunities, or such commands, with readiness and love? Such be the proofs of love which thou must shew hereafter.

JANUARY 3

THE VIRTUES NOTABLY SET FORTH BY CHRIST IN HIS CIRCUMCISION.

1. Be the first *Obedience*. Not bound by this law, He yet submitted thereunto. And, for that circumcision was a protestation of subjection to the whole Law, He signified that He then took upon Him that whole burden, heavy though it might be. If He for thy sake assumed that galling yoke, why chafest thou against the light one of thy religious rule? Why dost thou fling from off thy neck that which will serve to thine own good? But, sayest thou, This, and this, bind me not under pain of sin. So then the yoke is easier still: come, shoulder it!

2. *Humility*. Circumcision was the remedy for original sin: and argued therefore such infection in him that suffered it. Christ sinned not, nor could sin: yet He accepteth branding as a sinner. Ah, the humility of my God! But ah, my pride! I, a sinner indeed, would not be thought one. Let me learn to accept confusion willingly, and not seek to seem other than I am.

3. *Charity*, whereby He hastened to receive wounding for me. His love for me bade Him not to seek honour or delights, but wounds, and blood, in very infancy. Too late, too late have I loved thee! Nay, even now how lukewarm my love, so long as it can bear no hard, stern test!

JANUARY 4

OF THE GIVING OF THE NAME OF JESUS.

1. *His name was called JESUS.* Luke ii. 21.

When? Even at His Circumcision, when He received the sinner's mark, and abased Himself to the utmost. Even then God gave Him that glorious Name which is above every name. So doth God exalt him that humbleth himself. Thou hast the name of a companion of Jesus: that thou bear it worthily, share His humility.

2. *His name was called JESUS.* Luke ii. 21.

When? Even at His Circumcision. The name of Jesus was bought at the price of Jesus' Blood. Thou hast the name of a companion of Jesus: that thou bear it worthily, thou must be circumcised, nay, mortified. Hast thou known mortification? Wilt thou ensue it henceforth? By what path?

3. *His name was called JESUS* Luke ii. 21.

When? At His Circumcision, whereby He bound Himself to keep the whole of the ancient Law. Thou hast the name of a companion of Jesus: see how this bindeth thee to keep God's laws; for it is by keeping them that thou mayest be like Jesus. Examine thyself, reflect upon thy state, resolve what thou wilt do.

JANUARY 5

THE REASON OF THE NAME OF JESUS, AND THE OBLIGATION WHICH IT LAYETH UPON US.

1. *For he shall save his people.* Matthew i. 21.

Therefore He is called Jesus, "Saviour." Right aptly do name and character agree. Thou hast the name of a companion of Jesus : hast thou also a zeal for saving of souls? The name without the fact will be a name of infamy. Then stir up zeal within thee by the example of Christ.

2. *Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.* 2 Timothy ii. 19.

If Paul deemeth it unworthy that the very name of Christ should be uttered by a sinner, how much more to have the Christian's name, and *sin*. Thou then that hast this name, thy first obligation is to do no sin, no, not the smallest. Examine thyself, and with contrition resolve thyself anew.

3. *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him.* Colossians iii. 17.

Behold the second obligation of this name of Jesus which thou bearest, that His glory be the beginning, the middle, and the end, of all thy words and deeds. Seek thou no glory else. Yet again examine thyself : be moved to fear and sorrow : yet let them lead to love and joy and peace.

JANUARY 6

OF THE CALLING OF THE WISE MEN.

1. *When Jesus was born . . . behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.* Matthew ii. 1.

At one and the same time God manifested Himself to the Jews by an angel, to the Gentiles by a star.

Acknowledge the good of God, who will have none shut out from grace, though undeserving and reluctant. For the truth hereof search out thine own experience. Ponder the years that are past : then wilt thou understand : then wilt thou wonder that God hath pursued thee all this while : wilt grieve, yet give Him thanks : wilt frame thy resolutions, and seek grace to keep them well.

2. *We have seen his star.* Matthew ii. 2.

How woeful was Gentile blindness before the birth of Christ ! But to-day they have seen a great light. Bethink thee of the state of thine own soul before the rising of the star of Christ, and of its present happiness. Loathe then the darkness of the past, and thank God for thy present state of grace in Him.

3. *We have seen his star.* Matthew ii. 2.

He calleth them by a star, for that they were wholly given to gazing on the stars. Thus doth God match the manner of His call to their own bent. Withal He inly teacheth them what meaneth this same star, and inclineth their wills unto obedience. (1) Acknowledge thou thy need of grace, without which thou wilt not come to God. Pray Him to give it thee. (2) Learn to discover the bent of them thou dealest with : and thereby make gain of them. (3) Learn to rise from creature to Creator, as they from the star came to the knowledge of the Sovran Lord of all the stars.

JANUARY 7

OF THE CO-OPERATION OF THE WISE MEN WITH GOD'S
VOCATION.

1. *We have seen.* Matthew ii. 2.

Not three alone, but all in that region, per-adventure, saw the star : but those three only followed it. Truly *many be called, but few chosen*. How many *stars* hath God sent to thee, even His

holy inspirations! How few hast thou followed! This thy neglect should move thee both to grief and fear: seek from His bounty more such stars as these; only take heed by thy good deeds to make thy calling sure.

2. *We have seen . . . and are come.* Matthew ii. 2.

The Vision was God's gift: the coming was their own. Grace is frustrated if there be no co-operation. See that the grace of God be not in vain in thee. Neglect no gift of grace: each one may be the last.

3. *We have seen . . . and are come.* Matthew ii. 2.

No pause between. As soon as God called, they obeyed, detained not by the example of the many kept back by care of home, by love of kindred, by their own interest. Learn to make no delay while thou hast the light: and break the bonds of earthly love.

JANUARY 8

OF THE WISE MEN LEAVING THEIR OWN COUNTRY, AND
OF THEIR JOURNEY.

1. *We have seen . . . and are come.* Matthew ii. 2.

They are not ignorant of travellers' discomfort, of roughness both of path and weather. Imagination perchance is worse than the reality, yet none the less they make adventure. Brave hearts indeed! And such must be all that will journey unto God: for the way to Heaven is strewn with all discomforts. Take courage then: be vigorous: make brave resolve, and trust in God.

2. *We have seen . . . and are come.* Matthew ii. 2.

Called of God, they start upon their way, not knowing whither they go: gallant and brave, they trust themselves to God's vocation: and, lo, their confidence hath earned for them the guiding star.

How often thou fearest to take up some enterprise because thou knowest not the end thereof ! When thou art persuaded of the will of God, resolve thyself, and trust : He that granted the will, will grant also the performance.

3. *We have seen.* Matthew ii. 2.

Consider the hearts of those Wise Men on their way, with the star of wonder ever before their eyes : their thankfulness, their patience in adversity, their longing for Christ, their earnestness to find Him. They put thee to shame : with all thy light, thou hast so little longing for thy Lord, or care to find Him. Yet thank God for thy light. Pray for illuminations that will stir thy heart : determine with thyself that thou wilt follow them.

JANUARY 9

THE THREE WISE MEN ENTER JERUSALEM.

1. *Where is he that is born King of the Jews?* Matthew ii. 2.

Having lost the sight of the star, they must enquire of men. But how came it that they lost the star? Peradventure God would prove their constancy. Often He depriveth even the Saints of spiritual consolations, and sendeth them dryness of spirit. If such be thy case, what wilt thou do? Lo, the Wise Men go forward, and enter the city, full of hope that God will shew them a way. Thou likewise must not be faint of heart.

2. *Where is he that is born King of the Jews?* Matthew ii. 2.

The fearless courage of it ! Within a city of Herod's jurisdiction, with Herod, in all his pride, alive and on the throne, they make such perilous enquiry of a new King. It was their lively faith and burning eagerness that blotted out all fear of danger.

How often do groundless fears deter thee from a path of little steepness, or tempt thee to turn back again! Be ashamed, and mend thy ways.

3. *When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.* Matthew ii. 3.

The King is troubled in the proud possession of his throne, fearing to lose it: the people likewise as partisans of their King, fearing to offend him. See how even one earthly affection, or ungoverned passion, troubles our peace of mind. Wouldest thou have this peace? Cast then ungoverned passions from thy mind.

JANUARY 10

HEROD ENQUIRETH WHERE CHRIST SHALL BE BORN.

1. *And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together.* Matthew ii. 4.

O wondrous providence of God! The malignant Herod, the unrighteous priests, do His service in the guidance of the Wise Men. Praise then and magnify that providence. If thou wilt truly know the will of God, consult His ministers. Though they be unrighteous, God suffereth them not to err in that which He will have thee do.

2. *He demanded of them where Christ should be born.* Matthew ii. 4.

How devout in semblance his question! Yet how black his heart! The heart of the wicked loveth to affect holiness. Ah, suffer no passion to have the dominion over thee: for it will make thee also to be beside thyself: will bid thee excuse its promptings as the call of virtue; disguising anger under the cloke of zeal; and many such like deceits.

3. *And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa.* Matthew ii. 5.

Yea, they knew this from the Scripture, which they cite, and give that knowledge to the Wise Men : yet, they themselves, blind fools, seek not Jesus, when He is so near. Ungrateful hearts! And how many things dost thou too hear and know, which might be stepping-stones to Jesus. Why dost thou make no move? Thy knowledge will be thy curse, if thou art thus inert.

JANUARY. II

HEROD CONVERSETH WITH THE WISE MEN.

1. *Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.* Matthew ii. 7.

Wherefore? That he might gather therefrom the time of the young Child's birth, wreak his fierce will on all of equal age, and so destroy this "King." Note how he *enquired diligently*. If the children of iniquity so diligently seize the means to compass their most wicked ends, how wilt thou need to act for holy purposes?

2. *Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again.* Matthew ii. 8.

Behold the growth of evil in his heart. Herod now seeketh to induce the Wise Men themselves to help him sate his desire. It is the very nature of inordinate desires to creep on, worse and worse. Let this be a reason to inspire thee to crush them down. Look well and see what such desire may be in thy heart, and in good time prepare the pruning knife.

3. *That I may come and worship him also.* Matthew ii. 8.

Thou liest, Herod. Say plainly, That I may put Him to death. Now his desire hath swollen so great that he will have Christ slain to establish his own

kingdom. Well mayest thou loathe with indignation this illgrowth of desire. But thou must will the death of all self-love, and evil affections, to establish for thyself a heavenly kingdom. For those and this kingdom can less dwell together than Christ can live, if Herod lives and reigns.

JANUARY 12

THE WISE MEN DEPART FROM JERUSALEM, AND COME
TO BETHLEHEM.

1. *When they had heard the king, they departed.* Matthew ii. 9.

Consider the anxious care of this their quest for Christ. Their only business in the city is that which serveth thereunto: they ask where He shall be born. When they have had the answer, they pursue their way, nor tarry for the sights. But thou, in that path of virtue thou hast entered on, how many diversions seekest thou in created things! How slow thy progress! Never is the tardy will a serious will.

2. *And, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them.* Matthew ii. 9.

They have endured the loss of the star with patient hope, and give not up the journey. Wherefore God giveth consolation and restoreth them the star. See how gracious is God to them that in time of desolation give up nothing that pertaineth to advance in virtue. Faint not then, if thou hast no consolation: bear thy burden patiently, and ever hope. (God will come back: commit thyself to Him.)

3. *Till it came and stood over where the young child was.* Matthew ii. 9.

Whither did this star lead them at last? To God verily, whom they sought; but also to the lowly stable. Observe whither the lights thou seest lead. If

to vanity, and self-esteem, they are but phantom flames: if to humility and self-contempt, then be they very stars from God. Follow, and they will shew Him to thy gaze.

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

OF THE ADORATION OF THE WISE MEN.

1. *And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother.* Matthew ii. 11.

Consider first how these Kings shrank not from the filth of the stable, nor despised that Infant's poverty and weakness; nay, by interior light they knew the young Child for God. Praise to God, and joy to those Wise Men! See thou shrink not from poverty or contempt. Now that thy God hath taken low estate for thee, thou wilt not find Him by the path of glory and reputation. Look within thee, and grieve for that thou findest: let thy heart fill with heavenly longing and desire.

2. *And fell down, and worshipped him.* Matthew ii. 11.

First they fell down with faces to the ground to do Him reverence, ay, and with minds to the ground of their own nothingness, for that they knew their stark dependence on God here manifest. Then straight they worshipped in fullest adoration, for that they knew Him God. Behold what estimation of ourselves is wrought by knowing God, yea, what reverence, yea, what subjection of the soul, yea, what contempt of self! Such would be thine in fullest measure, didst thou know God right well.

3. *And fell down and worshipped.* Matthew ii. 11.

Consider the emotions that then filled their hearts:

(1) How they gave thanks, that He had come into the world to redeem mankind, and by the star had led them to Himself. (2) How they offered themselves for perpetual obedience and lowliest service. Stir in thyself the same emotions, and offer thyself to whatsoever arduous tasks He shall demand.

MONDAY

OF THE OBLATION OF THEIR GIFTS.

1. *And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. Matthew ii. 11.*

They shew their faith by works; they appear not empty-handed before the King; they give of their precious things. Nor may we doubt that with those gifts were presented that which they signified: love with the gold; devotion with the frankincense; mortification with the myrrh. Believest thou that Christ is God? Prove it by thy works. Present unto Him these three mystic gifts. But, when thou hast offered them, take them not back again.

2. *They presented unto him gifts. Matthew ii. 11.*

Consider how pleasing were these gifts to Christ the Lord, not for their costliness, but for that which went with them: the lively faith; the loyalty; the humble submission; the love. God values thy gifts not for their amount, but for thine affection. So, when thou offerest thy gift to God, see that thine affection go with it.

3. *They presented unto him gifts. Matthew ii. 11.*

God suffereth not Himself to be overpassed by us in liberality: see what return He made to these their gifts. We cannot know, yet may we suppose that, for the gold, He gave increase of wisdom and love;

for the frankincense, a greater power of prayer and devotion; for the myrrh, a gift of incorruption, even such grace as would preserve them from sin. Thou wilt give nought to God without return. The more thou givest, the more thou shalt receive. Poor will be thy gifts, rich thy return)

TUESDAY

OF THE RETURN OF THE WISE MEN TO THEIR OWN COUNTRY.

1. *And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return unto Herod.* Matthew ii. 12.

They were in a strait: should they return the same way, or by some other road? Well may we believe that they had recourse to God, and begged for light. God sendeth His angel to instruct them. Own then and praise the providence of God, who ruleth His own flock. Commit thyself to Him, and most in time of doubt and adversity, sure of His present aid.

2. *Being warned of God . . . that they should not return unto Herod.* Matthew ii. 12.

Prompt to obey, though peradventure the road commanded was longer, rougher, and unknown, they care not that Herod expecteth their return: since God ordaineth otherwise. Learn then to set aside all thought of man and human motives, when God commandeth. Thou must go the way He biddeth. Look upon the past: plan for the future.

3. *They departed into their own country another way.* Matthew ii. 12.

On that former way, they lost the star; they met with Herod; they fell into danger through promising return. What would befall them if they went

back? Let thine own dangers give thee caution. Go not back thither where in thy past experience thou knowest thou hast gone astray: avoiding the occasion, thou wilt avoid the danger. How often hast found this true!

WEDNESDAY

FROM THE INFANCY OF CHRIST LEARN TO DESPISE THE
WORLD.

1. *Love not the world.* 1 John ii. 15.

So saith Jesus unto thee by His example. He is born in the night-time, secretly, with no display, no crowds, unknown of all; and, being born, proclaimeth not Himself to the kings of this world, but only to the lowly shepherds. Is not this to choose the hidden life? Why then dost thou seek the light? Learn holy retirement and the love of solitude: learn to give thyself to the common folk rather than to men of renown.

2. *Love not the world.* 1 John ii. 15.

Consider how none from the neighbourhood of Bethlehem or from Jerusalem visited Christ. They of Jerusalem knew that He was born, for it was they who instructed the Wise Men where that birth should be. He then, who might have imposed obeisance upon all, abode those forty days in a stable despised by His own. Is not this to condemn the world? And will thou have applause and reputation? Which then is in error, thou, or the Son of God?

3. *Love not the world.* 1 John ii. 15.

Consider that Christ had received gold from the Wise Men: He could then have seen to the providing of better comfort for Himself: so might He have

had more esteem from those passers by who looked down on Him. Is not this to despise the world, to refuse its plaudits of set purpose? But how art thou anxious to gain or not to lose a high repute! Nay rather choose contempt that thou mayest imitate Christ more nearly.

THURSDAY

FROM THE INFANCY OF CHRIST LEARN LOWLINESS.

1. *Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.* Matthew xi. 29.

So crieth Jesus unto thee from the stable, from the manger, from the swaddling clothes, for lowliness is condescension to a low estate. How lowly then this condescension of God, whose majesty is infinite! To be made a man, a servant, like unto us sinners! Pour out before Him thy wonder, thanks, and love. Wilt thou presume to bear thyself proudly? To be brought low is but thy proper state, for base thou art in truth. Ponder thy baseness, and bring low thy pride.

2. Consider how Christ in the stable concealeth the majesty of God and all His perfections: His wisdom, power, glory, riches, and the like. Adore thou them. Marvel, give praise and thanks to God in lowliness. Learn not to boast of what is thine, and to hide the graces thou mayest receive.

3. Consider that Christ made choice of abasement in all things. For mother He would have a poor and humble maid: for guardian, a carpenter: for lodging, a stable: for cradle, a manger: for bed, a little straw: and so in all else. Wilt thou affect a better quality, and deem such thy due? Shame on thee, base man, when for thee God is abased!

FRIDAY

FROM THE INFANCY OF CHRIST LEARN POVERTY.

1. *For our sakes he became poor.* 2 Corinthians viii. 9.

Who? The Lord of the whole world, in whose house are glory and riches. He who giveth to all men hath for Himself no superfluity. Gaze into the poor abode, and stand amazed : assay now the value of poverty, which God prized so high that, finding it not in Heaven, He came to earth to seek it. If thou wouldest imitate Jesus more closely, thou must cut off thy superfluities.

2. *For our sakes he became poor.* 2 Corinthians viii. 9.

He lacketh superfluities ; nay, but he scarce hath things necessary : swaddling clothes most mean and scanty ; for cradle, the manger ; for bed, the straw ; for warmth, the breath of animals. Be all amazed at God in poverty, and shamed at thine own self. Thou wouldest be poor, yet feel no lack : if such fall out, thou yieldest to vexation and murmuring. Learn thou with Jesus the poor, to endure even the lack of things necessary.

3. *For our sakes he became poor.* 2 Corinthians viii. 9.

Not only did He lack much that was necessary, but what He had was most mean, and comfortless : the stable swept by cold, the swaddling clothes so coarse, the manger so hard, the straw so rough. Ponder all this and say with S. Bernard : *The lower for my sake, the dearer to my heart.* Doth not this confound thee, when thou, who hast forsaken the world, still lovest and procurest earthly comfort? Is it thus that thou wilt imitate Jesus?

SATURDAY

FROM THE INFANCY OF CHRIST LEARN OBEDIENCE.

1. *He humbled himself, and became obedient.*
Philippians ii. 8.

His first act in the moment of His birth was of obedience; for He was born while obeying the decree to go up from Nazareth to Bethlehem. And this obedience—by whom was it given, and to whom? To an earthly monarch by the King of kings; to man by God; to a sinner by Him that taketh away the sins of the world. Thou seest what store Christ set by obedience. Nor was He moved from this path by the unrighteousness of him that made the decree, nor by the difficulty of the way: for that He knew that thus the Father would be glorified. Learn then to value and to love obedience; not to look to the person of him that ordaineth, but to God who ordaineth through him. For all power is of God.

2. *He humbled himself, and became obedient.*
Philippians ii. 8.

Consider how His first exercise of obedience was in things arduous; in lowliness, deep poverty, adversity, discomfort, and the like. That will He knew for best which consenteth in all things to the will of God. Learn thou in all thy ways to think of Him, and to offer thy will as a whole burnt sacrifice in the flame of adversity.

3. *He humbled himself, and became obedient.*
Philippians ii. 8.

Obedient in all things to His Mother, whether she would put Him to her breast, or lay Him in the straw; suffering Himself to be turned this way or that at His Mother's will. Marvel at this obedience of Christ; take joy in the happiness of His Mother.

Give the like happiness to them that have the rule over thee, suffering them to assign thee thy place of duty at their will. Great will be their consolation in responsibility: and far wilt thou have gone in the imitation of Jesus.

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

FROM THE INFANCY OF CHRIST LEARN PATIENCE.

1. Consider that Christ could have ordained that He should be born impassible, and have put far from Himself all that might chafe His flesh or cause Him pain: that this was not His will; nay rather, He willed to suffer even in tender infancy, though He might have deferred it till a stronger age. Why then art thou so far gone in self-love that thou avoidest every pain? Doth not thy past life oblige thee to practise mortifications? Thou knowest that they are pleasing unto Christ: why then dost thou delay?

2. Consider His actual sufferings: the cold, the stench, the want, the wound of circumcision, the grief of soul when He remembereth the multitude of sinners, and, for them, the fruitlessness of all His sufferings. And what the affections of His Heart as thus He suffereth? And what am I, the sick man, doing, if the Physician suffereth thus for me? Shall I flee suffering for God, who seeketh suffering for me?

3. Consider how He suffereth in innocence and guiltlessness. To do well and suffer for it is the patient suffering of the saints: to suffer for their faults the penalty of the guilty. And wilt thou suffer neitherwise? Shame on thee! If some occasion of

suffering happen to thee, think how thou hast a thousand times deserved it. If thou sufferest for well-doing, thou hast occasion to shew love, which is proved by enduring hardness; thou hast occasion of being made like Jesus Christ. The disciple is not above his Master.

MONDAY

FROM THE INFANCY OF CHRIST LEARN THE LOVE OF
GOD AND OF THY NEIGHBOUR.

1. Love is proved by deeds in which the good of the beloved is sought beyond the measure of self-pleasing. Consider then what are those deeds of Christ in which He seeketh the good of God, even to His own distress. (1) He beareth all manner of discomfort, because He knoweth it is the Father's pleasure. (2) He weepeth over the sins of men, from zeal for the honour of God: He giveth tears, and afterward blood, to wash away those sins. (3) He inviteth shepherds and Gentiles to that cave, to make known to them the glory of God. If thou lovest God, prove it by thy deeds: promote His glory, first in thyself, and then in others. For He to whom alone all glory is due alone is worthy to receive it.

2. Consider that Christ proved His love to us also, in that He offered all those discomforts to the Father on our behalf. All thanks and love unto His name! Learn thou to love thy neighbour and do him good, not for thine pleasure, but for his salvation. So purify all thy love towards men, that this be the sole good thou wishest them: thus shalt thou be Christ's helper in the redemption of mankind.

3. Consider that Christ proved His love to us by taking upon Him all our woes of body and of mind : pain, sadness, weariness, the punishments we deserved, that satisfaction for sin we could not pay. He Himself hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. What owest thou to the Physician who was made sick for thee? What to the Surety who paid for thy default? Canst not thou henceforth have compassion on thy neighbour, and bear with his failings?

TUESDAY

FROM THE INFANCY OF CHRIST LEARN HOW IN HOLINESS
THOU MAYEST LOVE THYSELF.

1. Holy self-love is the willing for oneself not of the deceitful appearance of good, but of its firm and eternal substance. What good did Jesus will for Himself? Not the pleasure of the senses, but the glory of God. Even in infancy this seal was set upon His Heart : *I seek not mine own glory, but the glory of the Father which hath sent me.* John v. 30. Contrast that love wherewith until now thou hast loved thyself, so uncontrolled, so sensual. Rather hast thou indeed hated thyself, since thou hast indulged thyself in that which turneth thee away from God. Correct then thy self-love, so that thou will nothing for thyself which is not for the glory of God : else dost thou truly hate thyself, and art become thine own adversary.

2. Consider that the love of Jesus for Himself was the longing for the fulfilment of the Divine will in Him. He that doeth always those things that please God did them even in the manger. Thou canst will no

greater good for thyself than that His will be the rule of thy life : thus shalt thou never go astray, ever please God. How few there be that look to that will for their guide ! How many that follow the leading of their senses ! If thou art of that number, grieve for it, and amend thy ways.

3. Consider that out of this holy love for Himself Christ accepted pains, humiliations, poverty, contempt ; for that in them He beheld the light of God's good pleasure and the salvation of the world. Wherefore in this same holy self-love He strove with the senses, and did them violence. So shouldest thou love thyself : so shouldest thou drive from their stronghold thy senses and their lusts, and claim for thy path the lowly, rough and hard highway : since *this* is the will of God. How happy wouldest thou be, if from a child thou hadst so done ! How wretched, unless thou now so persevere !

WEDNESDAY

THE JOURNEY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN FROM
BETHLEHEM TO JERUSALEM FOR HER PURIFICATION.

1. *And when the days of her purification . . . were accomplished.* Luke ii. 22.

Consider how anxious she was for the fulfilment of that law of purification, by which she was not bound. She maketh no excuse of virginity unblemished, nor of the dignity of her offspring. She followeth the example of her Son, who fulfilled the law of circumcision, when He neither needed it nor was bound thereby. She taketh it for glory to be falsely numbered among the unclean, since even so her Son was numbered among the transgressors. O wondrous obedience and humility ! how different am I ! In

the sight of God I am a sinner : in the eyes of men I stand upon my honour. Shame on me ! Let me learn from Jesus and Mary.

2. Consider the thoughts of the hearts of the Blessed Virgin and S. Joseph as they left the stable in which with Jesus only for companion they found a wondrous joy in all the hardship, and the utter poverty. In want of all else the companionship of Jesus was their one abounding consolation. With Jesus no place is solitary, no poverty is grievous, no discomfort hard to bear. Dost thou find such things hard ? My friend, thou art not wholly of the company of Jesus : thou cravest seeming consolations from the creatures, despising the true comfort. Thou forsakest the fountain of living water, and diggest cisterns for thyself.

3. Consider the poverty, modesty, patience of these wayfarers, despised by passers by, shut out from the inns. Hark to their holy converse, while their hearts burn for Jesus. See them alternate their offices for Jesus : now it is Mary who carrieth the young Child, now Joseph : and so in all they do. Mark their reverence and duteous care. Would that thine affections were like theirs, when it is thy turn to carry Jesus, when thou hast taken Him in the Eucharist !

THURSDAY

OF THE REASONS FOR THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

1. *And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished.* Luke ii. 22.

Without doubt the Blessed Virgin was divers ways entitled to be exempt from the law of purification :

weigh then the reasons why none the less she would be purified. The first, as Dionysius the Carthusian allegeth, was *that she might obey the Law*, wherein she paid reverence to the Lawgiver. Perfect obedience is not content with the fulfilling of obligation. If thou hast a rule in respect of some thing lawful, what boots it that bind thee not under pain of sin? Aim not so low that thy will goeth no further than to avoid sin. That way lieth a fall: beware thereof. Observe how the Blessed Virgin would herein set an example of humility.

2. Consider the second reason alleged by the same Father: *that she might imitate her Son, whom she had seen subject to the law of circumcision*, when He was not bound thereby. Behold then a motive for observance of thy rules, even though they bind thee not under pain of sin: thus thou shalt imitate more nearly Christ, and the Blessed Virgin. Thou canst not go astray if thou keep to the road along which the Son of God goeth before thee. Fear, if thou walkest not therein: love, and thou shalt so walk.

3. Consider how the third reason was that the most pure Mother might be yet the more purified, not by departing from impurity, but by attaining to the very height of purity. For so she became more like unto Jesus Christ, who is Himself the primal rule of this same grace. Thus the Fathers teach that this mystery was to her an increase of purity, even as her child-bearing was an enhancement of virginity. If the aspiration to attain the height of purity moveth thee not to the observance of thy rules, be moved by the longing to depart from impurity. Look within, and see thy weakness. Nay, but press towards that height by a constant desire to make progress in the way of holiness.

FRIDAY

OF OTHER REASONS FOR THE PURIFICATION.

1. *When the days of her purification . . . were accomplished.* Luke ii. 22.

Consider another reason alleged by S. Denys the Carthusian : *to avoid offending the Jews.* They knew that she had been delivered of a child, but knew not that she was the Mother of God. To avoid offence the Mother of God useth not her privilege. Learn from this that, to avoid offence, it is sometimes expedient to do more than thou art obliged unto, and likewise to refrain from what is lawful for thee. Such is the demand of charity.

2. Consider yet another reason alleged by the same Father : *to conform herself to other women in things lawful and honest.* So then the Virgin walketh in the public highway, not by some private path. Seek not unwonted paths, or dispensations, nay, refuse them rather. The highway is safer, being well tried and hedged about with rules inspired by God. This way went the Saints before thee : walk thou in it diligently.

3. Consider this further reason alleged by Peter Blesensis : *to perform somewhat beyond mere duty.* There was no obligation. Art thou then never to do more than thou art obliged unto? God loveth to receive more than He commandeth. Acts of homage beyond thy debt are more pleasing unto Him than those thou must needs pay. Thou art too like a miser, if thou give nought beyond the debt of obligation. Wouldest thou have God give thee nought but what He must? Then poor and needy wouldest thou be indeed!

SATURDAY

THE CHIEF VIRTUES THAT THE BLESSED VIRGIN SHEWED FORTH IN HER PURIFICATION.

1. Already thou hast noted her obedience and her love of purity: think now on her humility. She knew that thus she must be reckoned even as other women. She studieth to *be* pure, not to seem so. Mother though she be of God, she bewrayeth not herself. Ah, how far art thou from her! Studieth thou not seeming more than being? Yet seeming is external to thyself: being is the true self, and this alone can profit thee. Study then rather to *be* that thou wouldest seem: care not for seeming, but for being only.

2. Consider how the Blessed Virgin sheweth thee an example of poverty. She could have offered a lamb, as did the rich, if she had bought it with the gold presented by the Wise Men: but she preferred the sacrifice of the poor, for that she saw Jesus for our sake made poor. And dost not thou choose for thyself the marks of honour? scheme for them? take pleasure in the good things of this life? Is this to imitate Jesus in His poverty? Doubt not that the sacrifice of the turtle doves was for its very simplicity the more pleasing unto God. And what wilt thou offer to thy God?

3. Consider the devotion wherewith she offered her Son and her oblation to the priest: what purity of intention, what charity, what sweet savour, went up with her offering. Set thy devotion alongside of hers. See how much is lacking unto thee: mark how thou needest it in thy vocation. So order then thy time and active life, that thou mayest join thee closer unto God.

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

WHEREFORE CHRIST WILLED TO BE OFFERED.

1. *They brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord.* Luke ii. 22.

Consider that the Author of the Law willed to fulfil in deed what by His word He had commanded. There is no way by which the lawgiver or teacher can more securely establish his law or teaching than by his deeds. Much speakest thou to others of virtue and of God: but dost thou practice it? Not he that shall teach or exhort receiveth praise from Christ, but *whosoever shall do and teach*. See then that thou confirm thy words by deeds. (Virtue standeth not in saying, but in doing.)

2. Consider that He that came to teach humility let no occasion pass to exercise the same. He will be deemed mere man, even as others, and bound by the same law of sin. But what of that? The Son of God taketh more count of the Father's pleasure than of His own honour. But thine attention, maybe, is turned the other way. Nay, peradventure, thou even convertest to thine own honour what thou owest to God. The more thou takest thought for thine own honour, the less will God provide for it, or suffer thee to have it: for His *glory will he not give to another*.

3. Consider that Christ willed by double title to be ours, He who had been *given* by the Father willed in His Presentation to be *bought*, as saith S. Thomas of Villanova. See then how He seeketh and redoubleth His titles to be thine. Do thou the like towards Him. How many are to thy hand! How many thou dost lose or else neglect! Henceforth be thou more anxious than heretofore to belong to God. Each hour, each creature will provide thee with a title. The more that thou art God's, the more will God be thine.

MONDAY

THE MOTHER'S GIFT TO THE FATHER, HER SON; THE SON'S GIFT, HIMSELF.

1. Consider the affections of the Virgin's heart Godward as she offered to Him this her sacrifice: her faith, her worship, her thanks for all the gifts bestowed on her, her charity, her resignation: consider too her charity to usward, in that she offered Him to the Divine Justice for our salvation. Thanks be to the Virgin for this her charity. See thou learn from her to offer for thy sins this self-same sacrifice with the like affections. Offer thyself, and all thou art and canst: in union with this sacrifice, for no otherwise shalt thou find acceptance. There is nothing pleasing unto God, but what is offered along with Christ, or His merits.

2. Consider how Christ offered Himself to the Eternal Father, to promote His glory, and the salvation of mankind. Mark well the deep and pure affections of His Heart; how He *pleased not Himself*. Ignite thou in thyself a fire of zeal for the glory of God, and the salvation of thy neighbours. Offer thyself for any arduous task to God and those who stand in His place. Loathe thy lukewarmness even until now. Implore His grace. Think how at that moment Christ turned His gaze even on thee. What owest thou unto Him? There is but one repayment thou canst make: to imitate.

3. Consider how pleasing was this oblation unto God. The Mother made the offering, yet the Son made offering of Himself. The Father's Son, His well-beloved, was offered as the price of the whole world for the glory of God, and our redemption. Unite thy joy with the Father's joy, the Mother's joy, the world's joy, for that at last one offering hath been found well-pleasing unto God. Weigh well the

price whereat God appraiseth thee, the measure of His love. What wilt thou give Him back but love? Even the brutes grudge not love to those that love them.

TUESDAY

OF THE COMING IN OF THE AGED SIMEON, AND THE
COMMENDATION OF HIM.

1. *And the same man was just and devout.* Luke ii. 25.

A fair commendation of the aged saint! The best disposition for receiving Christ into the arms, nay, into the soul, is justice, or holiness of life, and God-fearing devotion. Justice maketh him one with Christ, and such devotion keepeth the unity unbroken: not only doth it *cast out sin*, but keepeth far away even the smallest blemish. For *he that feareth the Lord is negligent in nothing*. Learn then, if thou wouldest keep the purity of thy soul, to pay heed to the slightest defects thereof, lest by them thou open the path to greater ones, and so fall away by little and little. Perfection sheweth itself in little things. Dost thou thus pay heed?

2. *Waiting for the consolation of Israel.* Luke ii. 25.

Knowing the promise of a Saviour, he saw the passing of the ages, the death of all the patriarchs and prophets who had hoped for Him; yet remained constant in his expectation. O confidence in God, O constancy in expectation! What is the consolation that *thou* waitest for? Pray God it be not the vain and perishing consolation of the creatures. Is it then that holy consolation which is in God alone? Yet until now thou hast not found it: thou countest not thyself to have attained. Wait for the Lord in strong confidence, and persevere. He will come in very deed, if thou with hope lay hold on Him.

3. *And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.* Luke ii. 26.

See the reward of his justice, his devotion, his patient waiting; the certainty that he should see Christ. Perchance he dared not to enquire of God concerning this, whether from humility, or from certainty of confidence; yet none the less *it was revealed*. Thou hast a blessing like to his. Every command, every rule, is to thee a revelation by the Holy Ghost that thou shalt not see death, if thou observe it with justice, devotion, and confidence. Even so saith the Lord: *This do, and thou shalt live* (Luke x. 28). It is for thee to make the promise sure unto thyself.

WEDNESDAY

SIMEON TAKETH CHRIST UP IN HIS ARMS.

1. *And he came by the Spirit into the temple.* Luke ii. 27.

Consider how Simeon, moved by that same Spirit from whom he had received the promise, hastened into the Temple, his heart aflame and athirst, at the very hour when Christ was brought thither. Had he missed the opportunity, he would not have seen the Lord's Christ. O the importance of seizing opportunity and offered grace! Defer not, when a grace is in thy grasp: now peradventure it is offered for the last time and never will return. Let the sorry memory of so many graces heretofore neglected move thee to use this one aright.

2. *Then took he him up in his arms.* Luke ii. 28.

The promise had been that he should *see* Christ: but in the event it was given him to take Him in his arms. God ever giveth more than He hath promised.

It is thou whose vows and good intentions outrun thy performance. Be not thus niggardly with Him, who sheweth Himself so liberal to thee. He took Him into his arms, which signify action, as saith S. Hugh. A man may reach unto God by desiring of Him, but keepeth not hold of Him but by act. So then, if thou art content to make resolves, and goest not on to action, thou hast lost thy way.

3. *And blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.* Luke ii. 28, 29.

Consider his affections as he held the Child Jesus in his arms, faith, hope, charity, joy for himself, and all the world, resignation and, most of all, desire to die: whereby he sheweth that no love of the creatures hath detained him in this life, but only the hope of seeing Jesus. Happy that soul which wasteth not its love upon creatures, but gathereth it all together for God! The very object of thy creation calleth for no less than this. Withdraw then thine affection from created things. Each step thou takest away from these is a step towards God.

THURSDAY

SIMEON PROPHESETH OF CHRIST.

1. *Behold this child is set for the fall.* Luke ii. 34.

The Saviour for the *fall*! Yea, of them that should know God, yet refuse to honour Him as God: who should misuse their graces, and by their own fault fail of their vocation. Stand thou in fear lest He be for thy fall, if thou use not His grace. Grieve for thy too frequent misuse of graces given thee. Pray for gifts of grace effectual. Resolve to co-operate therewith. Ah, may His example and His aid be rather for the downfall of thy lusts.

2. *And rising again of many.* Luke ii. 34.

Yea, and of all, if they will have it so. None is shut out by God from the grace of rising again. How gracious doth He shew Himself! Being offended, He offereth grace: being injured, He seeketh the friendship of His enemy. *He willeth not the death* of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. All this not for His own good or benefit, but thine. Therefore God willeth thy good more earnestly than thou thyself. Yet though thou rise again by His help, how often by thine own fault thou fallest yet once more! Shame on thee! now at last so rise again, that thou mayest never fall. But thou must crush the pressure of thy lusts that they make thee not to slip.

3. *And for a sign which shall be spoken against.* Luke ii. 34.

The life of Christ fell out according to the prophecy. *He endured* without ceasing *the contradiction of sinners against himself*: Herod seeking to put Him to death: the Jews taking up stones against Him: His teaching condemned or despised: Himself set as a mark for taunts and calumnies and tortures. How often hast thou thyself contradicted His life and doctrine! Henceforth be Jesus unto thee a sign not for contradiction, but conformity: set as a mark for thy desires and acts.

FRIDAY

OF SIMEON'S PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

1. *A sword shall pierce through thy own soul.* Luke ii. 35.

See how God minglenth the bitter with the sweet. The Blessed Virgin had heard from Simeon praise

and blessing for her Son. What joy drew she from this! Now she heareth of the sword, which shall pierce not her body but her very soul. It cannot be but that the woes of the Son will grievously afflict the heart of that Mother who so loveth Him. Injury to the beloved is torture to the lover. Wilt thou have a sign whether thou lovest Jesus? Discover then thy mind towards His pains, brought on Him by thee or others. Dost thou indeed grieve for them, hate them, strive to prevent them, and all this with burning zeal? Why then, take heart, for that thou lovest indeed: and see thou fan that flame, whenever thou seest injury done to God.

2. *A sword shall pierce through thy own soul.*
Luke ii. 35.

Consider wherefore God willed to bring this sword of grief by the prophetic word upon the Virgin even in the infancy of Christ. Peradventure He desired her yet more conformed to Him; that as He from infancy had His Passion ever before His eyes, so she too might suffer the torment of the same anticipation. See the goal of constant cross-bearing and mortification, even the likeness of Christ. For adversity giveth thee advance in virtue; and such advance maketh thee more like to Christ. Lovest thou His likeness? Then thou must love the Cross. Resolve thyself with a good courage and embrace the Cross.

3. *A sword shall pierce through thy own soul.*
Luke ii. 35.

Consider that this prophecy was even then fulfilled, but yet more at the time of the Passion of Christ. Tell the tale of the sufferings of Christ. Gaze on the Virgin standing by the Cross. Think of the anguish of the Mother to see such despite done unto her Son. But thou also hast pierced the Mother with a sword, in all the despite thou hast done to Him. Grieve thou for this, and stand in fear of the sword of the wrath of God.

SATURDAY

OF THE COMING IN OF ANNA THE PHOPHETESS.

1. *She . . . departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.* Luke ii. 37.

Consider this holy matron's ceaseless perseverance in her appointed exercises. No virtue is worthy of the name, unless it have perseverance. Nought else receiveth the crown. How then shalt *thou* attain that crown? Thou so great in resolution, so poor in performance! cast down by the smallest difficulty! Ah, now at length break thy way through, and thou shalt find that easy which seemed so full of toil.

2. *She . . . departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.* Luke ii. 37.

Then consider what were the actual virtues of holy Anna: her virginal and widow's chastity, exact observance of the Divine Law, frequent converse with God, and rigid abstinence. By these she was found worthy to know Christ for very God; for these be the virtues whereunto God unveils Himself. Wilt thou that God reveal Himself to thee? Keep thy heart pure, observe the commandments of God, hold frequent colloquy with Him, withdraw thyself from sensual delights.

3. *And she coming in at that instant.* Luke ii. 38.

Consider how God had foreordained that this should be the hour of Anna's happiness, yet in such wise that it was for her to win the consolation by coming to the Temple even then. So doth God conjoin His graces each to its own time and opportunity, and if thou seize them not that instant, perchance they never shall be thine. Take heed then thou pass not by the grace offered to thee even now. The neglect

of one leadeth oftentimes to the loss of many. For God traileth graces past thee like a chain : draw unto thee one link, and duly shalt thou gain the rest. If thou knewest that thy salvation depended upon this one grace, what wouldest thou do? And peradventure it doth so depend. Ah, be not thus dull and listless.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

OF THE AFFECTIONS OF THE HEART OF ANNA THE
PROPHETESS, AND THE WORDS OF HER LIPS.

1. *And she coming in at that instant.* Luke ii. 38.

Consider what were the affections of the heart of Anna, as she knew the Child for very God beneath the veil of flesh : the faith, hope, love, joy, thankfulness, resignation, and the like. Are such thine affections towards God that veileth Himself beneath the outward form of bread. If thou hast faith, why shewest thou not Him a greater reverence? If hope, why art thou so crushed by adversity? If love, why dost thou share out that love upon created things? If joy, why dost thou seek for consolations in the mire? If thou art thankful for this wondrous boon, why settest thou so much store on that which cometh not from God? If thou indeed resignest thyself into God's hands, why dost thou so oft withdraw thyself again?

2. *Gave thanks likewise unto the Lord.* Luke ii. 38.

She blessed and glorified the Lord. Her vehement affections brake forth into words. It is not told us what they were ; but we may believe that she praised the goodness and mercy which God had shewn His servants : that she marvelled at His humility and emptying of Himself. How cometh it that thou art so sterile in the praises of God? Even because the

affections of thy heart are lukewarm and all too weak. The lover hath no lack of words to speak of the beloved. By thy words thou shewest where thou hast set thy love. Examine thyself, thy words and all thy speech : then thou shalt know where is thy heart, and whence thou must recall it.

3. *And spake of him to all.* Luke ii. 38.

What spake she? Doubtless she told them how that this was the Messiah, so long expected, and bade them give all their love to Him alone : with other converse, as to thyself thou mayest represent it. Doth not thy profession and calling demand of thee, that thou teach and inflame in the knowledge and love of Jesus *all* that have been redeemed by His Blood, that thou withdraw thyself from none, though poor and needy? Why then dost thou escape all contact with the poorer sort, or spurnest them from thee? Is a soul vile because covered with vile raiment? Did the Son of God die for them alone that wear goodly apparel? To true zeal no soul is vile. Kindle then within thyself this zeal for souls.

MONDAY

CHRIST IS REDEEMED ACCORDING TO THE LAW WITH
FIVE SHEKELS.

1. *To do for him according to the custom of the law.* Luke ii. 27.

The Evangelist recordeth not that Christ's Mother purchased Him from the priest for the accustomed price : doubtless, however, she fulfilled every tittle of the Law, and therefore paid for Him the five shekels. Consider then who it is that thus doth purchase Him? Even the Blessed Virgin ; but not to keep Him for herself, but to nurse Him for us, that afterward He might give Himself wholly unto us. What thanks

thou owest to the Virgin for her anxious care for thy welfare! What should be the affections of thy heart as thou receivest Him at her hands!

2. Consider from whom she doth purchase Him. Even from the Eternal Father to whom He had been offered. He had given us His Son by the Incarnation: now He giveth Him afresh, or rather selleth Him to us, ever seeking new titles to make Him all our own. So intent is He on our salvation, that He restoreth unto us the Redeemer, though offered to Himself. Would that I dealt with God as He with me! Often indeed I offer Him my heart, my will, my other faculties; and straightway claim again what I have offered. But now, O God, take thou my heart, my will, my body, and my soul by this my deed of gift irrevocable, and dispose of them as thou desirest.

3. Consider the price wherewith He is purchased, even with the five shekels appointed by the Law. Behold with how small a price may God be bought! Though He is the infinite Good, yet, bearing in mind thy poverty, He would not exact an infinite price; nor would He ask a great one, lest thou shouldest make excuse: yet would He not give Himself for nought, that thou mightest claim the stricter title to the possession of Him. Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, if thou purchase not for thyself so great a Good for so small a price, and one that lieth to thy hand. Yet how often thou spendest a greater price, more toil, on vanities and sensual delights!

TUESDAY.

THE WRATH OF HEROD.

1. *Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men.* Matthew ii. 16.

When he saw. Truly the Wise Men had intended

to return to him : howbeit God ordered their course otherwise, commanding them by an angel to return another way. This knew not Herod, yet holdeth it as certain as though his eyes beheld it that their mind was to mock him. Behold the shameful errors of the suspicious mind ! He dareth to scrutinize their inmost intent, and taketh for surety the imaginations of his own heart. He seeth not, yet blindly walketh on : therefore he goeth astray, and his heart is enraged. Hold then this fault in loathing : be rather blind in regard of other men's actions, than look on them with eyes of suspicion.

2. *When he saw that he was mocked.* Matthew ii. 16.

Nay, but Herod was the mocker. He had deceived and cheated the Wise Men, and now judged them after the likeness of himself. Well might he have bethought him of honest reason why they had not returned : so would his mind have been more at peace. Learn thou so to do, lest perchance thou poison even the fairest deeds. Wouldest thou not have men do so to thee ? Do then to them as thou wouldest have them do. So shalt thou have great calmness in thy soul, for it is through evil judgment that men most often lose their peace. Turn thine eyes upon thyself, with sorrow and good purposes.

3. *Was exceeding wroth.* Matthew ii. 16.

Consider how Herod in his wrath took counsel to slay Christ. Ah, monstrous cruelty ! Never doth wrath suggest sober counsel, nor passion advise for good. How often, when thou comest to thyself, dost thou condemn the decisions of thy passion ! Learn then to crush thy passions, lest they bring thee to counsels to be repented of. Look, if there be one that hath the mastery of thee : mark what it is : determine how thou wilt subdue it.

WEDNESDAY

THE DIVINE DECREE FOR THE WITHDRAWING OF CHRIST FROM THE WRATH OF HEROD.

1. Consider how different are the counsels of God from those of men. Christ is in danger of His life. It was within the power of God to destroy Herod, or to quench his wrath, or to endue His Son with invisibility. Yet the decree goeth forth for flight. O strange expedient, that taketh no account of the dignity of God's own Son! Even so ever dealeth God with them He loveth, directing them along the hard and difficult path. And is thy dignity above that of God's Son? Why dost thou grieve if God make stern trial of thee? Do thou own that thus He proveth His love to thee, and thou shalt find it the easier to bear; nay thou wilt rejoice and give Him thanks.

2. Consider that it was the will of God that Christ should flee, not to the Wise Men, from whom He would have enjoyed honour and veneration, but into Egypt, to a foreign race, the enemies of Jewry, far from friends and acquaintance. So to His Son, through all His infancy, He granted neither the consolation of friends, nor the honour and kindness of acquaintance. And why then seekest thou to be known and had in estimation, to be honoured and comforted? If thou didst know thyself for a servant of Christ, thou wouldest have none of it, and wouldest rather take pleasure in obscurity, scorn, affliction. Be bold to ply thyself with such demands, that thou mayest draw the nearer unto Christ.

3. Consider the words of one who saith : The Lord, who keepeth not His anger for ever, remembered all the evils that He had done unto Egypt : therefore He sent His Son to her, for a token of a wondrous recon-

ciliation. How gracious is God! Of His justice He robbed the Egyptians of their firstborn; of His mercy He entrusteth them with His own. Now let the sinner learn not to lose hope unto the end, when he is smitten of God. Nay, the smiting is but one proof of His graciousness; for He chasteneth every son whom He loveth. Receive then every punishment in humility, and assign all to the gracious goodness of God.

THURSDAY

JOSEPH IS WARNED BY AN ANGEL TO FLEE INTO EGYPT.

1. *The angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. Matthew ii. 13.*

Consider more minutely this command. (1) The angel giveth warning in the Name of God, as thy superior might do to thee. (2) He giveth it not to the Virgin, the more high exalted, but to Joseph as the head of the family. He ever beareth rule by means of those in authority, and guideth them lest they that be subject to them go astray. (3) He giveth it in sleep: for repose must be broken, when God calleth. (4) He biddeth him take the young Child and His Mother, and have no care of any household stuff. So let Jesus and Mary be all the garniture of thy house. (5) He shall go to the land of the enemy, even Egypt, for the safety of Jesus. Choose not thy place, but have it shewn thee rather. Though it seem perilous, God, who shewed it thee, will be thy guard.

2. *And be thou there until I bring thee word. Matthew ii. 13.*

He setteth no limit to the time he shall tarry. Leave unto God the term of thy business, position, duty, or affliction. He careth for thee, and will bring

a change, when it is expedient for thee. All thine arrangements for thyself, all thy scheming for arrangements to thy mind, are but withdrawal from the governance of God. If thou obtain not thy desire, how dost thou then distress thy soul! But and if thou obtain it, how little merit, how little consolation, what abundant danger!

3. *When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night.* Matthew ii. 14.

Behold the perfection of obedience: it is conjoined: (1) With subjection of his own judgment, though full many excuses might have been present to his mind. (2) With a ready will, though hard and difficult the task. (3) With swift despatch, that very night, breaking off slumber, leaving all that he had. (4) With cheerfulness, for that he knew this was the will of God. Examine thine own obedience under these four heads.

FRIDAY

OF THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

1. *And departed into Egypt.* Matthew ii. 14.

Consider the inmost thoughts of Joseph and of Mary. They tasted of the hardships of the way, the bitterness of the weather, the hardness of men's hearts, lack of food, and all discomfort. Yet in all these things one thought was their refreshment: All this we do, all this we suffer, for the saving of Jesus. And in this thought what consolation was theirs, what sweetness! By it was every bitterness made sweet. Be this same thy stay in adversity: it is for God I suffer.

2. Consider the thoughts of the heart of the Child Jesus. He, who had come to give life even to Herod,

knew Himself to be sought out for destruction. Was not His heart wounded, thinkest thou, for such ingratitude? Beware thou give not Christ the like occasion of grief, when thou makest no response to all thy blessings and graces. That Child omnipotent might have taken vengeance upon Herod, and maintained His own honour: yet would He not. False then are the axioms of self-love, that will not tolerate the jeopardy of honour.

3. Consider the bodily sufferings of Christ upon that journey. Remember His tender age, the bitter winter cold, the rains, the snows, the wretchedness or failure of the inns, the deep poverty of His parents, the savage tribes, and much besides. And all this He suffered, not of necessity, but of free will. Do I refuse to accept any suffering, even when necessity is laid on me? Shall I henceforth take count of comfort and convenience?

SATURDAY

OF THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS IN EGYPT.

1. Consider the sufferings of His Soul for others' sins. He there found Himself in the midst of a wicked nation, refusing worship to God, and paying it to idols, while He all that time was aflame with zeal for the glory of God. How deep was the wound hereby inflicted on His Soul, with Its unclouded vision of the very being of God, and of the shame of offences against His Majesty! With what fervour did He then offer His own life to take away all sins! But ah my lack of zeal! Scarce have my own sins power to wound me; the sins of others leave me all unscathed. Kindle this zeal within thee, O my soul; then shalt thou pay more heed that thine own actions be not displeasing unto God.

2. Consider His sufferings in Himself. The lack, not of superfluities alone, but of necessities; the scorn of men, when they took Him for no more than a carpenter's son. All these things the King of glory suffered not of necessity, but of His own free will, nay with joy, for that He knew that so He pleased the Father. Pity those Egyptians who, in their blindness, knew not Jesus who He was: yet beware lest thy blindness equal theirs. Give to Christ's patience thy meed of wondering praise: but see thou be not slack to imitate where thou delightest to praise.

3. Consider the pains of sympathy which Jesus bore: (1) For His most holy Mother and Joseph, whom for His sake He saw endure a grievous exile from their home: a pain proportionate to that love He bore them. (2) For the innocent children who for His sake likewise were butchered in that cruel massacre. Learn thou to feel for others' woes, and specially for them who in their innocence are slain by the sword of some Herod, such as is an evil companion. Take thou the same earnest care for their recovery as wickedness did for their degradation.

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

THE SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS.

1. *Sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem.* Matthew ii. 16.

Consider: (1) The bloody cruelty of Herod. He will have One put to death, and therefore slayeth all. See to what a pass this one passion of ambition leadeth: say rather *any* passion, unless it be subdued. (2) Call to memory the falls to which some one passion hath led thee in past time, and from thy failure learn to crush it, ere it crush thee. Tarry not: with time it gathereth strength.

2. *From two years old and under.* Matthew ii. 16.

Consider with what caution Herod accomplisheth his crime. (1) He slayeth them not with his own hand, but sendeth his minions, that if he be accused, he may cast the blame on them for exceeding his command. (2) He slayeth all for to ensure the death of Him he will have slain. (3) He slayeth them not in Bethlehem alone, where he had heard that Christ was born, but *in all the coasts thereof*. (4) He slayeth not those alone who were born since the rising of the star, but those of elder growth. Ah, suffer not the children of darkness to shew more caution in bringing ill to pass, than thou employest to avoid the same! Use all precaution, that no particle of goodness pass thee by, and that no evil creep unheeded on to thy path.

3. Consider the wonderful counsels of God, who over-ruleth the very crimes of men. For, as S. Chrysostom observeth in his Homilies, peradventure these children would not have grown up to righteousness, so that untimely death was indeed a blessing unto them. So moreover, the bruit of Herod's cruelty served to make known in Rome the coming of Messias, and the worship paid Him by the Wise Men. Learn then to turn evil to good purposes, for thy salvation and God's glory. So shalt thou imitate God right nearly, and earn thyself great gain.

MONDAY

JOSEPH IS WARNED TO RETURN FROM EGYPT.

1. *But when Herod was dead.* Matthew ii. 19.

Consider how Herod, who thought to establish his kingdom by the death of Christ, lost the same by his own death. God is just. For a time He winketh at our sins, but smiteth at the last, when least we look

for it. If His goodness restrain thee not in the moment that thou sinnest, then let fear of His Justice move thee in respect of past and future.

2. *The angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt.* Matthew ii. 19.

Consider the providence of God, who straightway announceth the death of Herod unto Joseph. How great the joy of Joseph when he marketh the care that God taketh for him! How was he then confirmed in confidence toward God! Do thou likewise: laud His providence: cast all thy thoughts on Him: submit thyself unto His governance. He will care for thee, and thine eyes shall see the joy that cometh forth of sorrow.

3. *Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel.* Matthew ii. 20.

The angel determineth not to what place in all the broad land of Israel Joseph shall betake himself. Perchance the cause thereof was that Joseph might turn again to God, to ask Him of the place. For God taketh a delight in our more frequent communion with Himself. For this cause He declareth not at once all that He will have us do. Give then to God this joy: turn thee to Him more often. Such is the way of closer union.

TUESDAY

OF THE RETURN FROM EGYPT.

1. *And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.* Matthew ii. 21.

Consider the indifferent readiness of Joseph and the Blessed Virgin to go either to or from the land of Egypt. They had no greater cause of joy in the

return than the good pleasure of God. Had His pleasure been a longer sojourn, even in pain and woe, their pleasure would have been no otherwise. So in all indifference they depended on His least behest. And what of thine indifference? Thou puttest off the execution of thy duty: thou declinest things within thy power, seekest for things beyond it, judgest by thine own taste of good and evil, feignest impotence in that thou hast no mind to, claimest thy fancies as a debt, countest as injury the refusing of thy desires: and many such like things.

2. *But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judæa in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither.* Matthew ii. 22.

Consider that there was in truth nothing for Joseph to fear in Judæa. *For they were dead which sought the young child's life* (Matthew ii. 20). Yet Joseph even in time of security feareth to lose Jesus. So is it ever with the holy conscience. Hast thou this solicitude? How needful it is among thy many dangers! Without it thou hast already lost all things, yea, thine own self also. Watch then, and pray.

3. *He . . . dwelt in a city called Nazareth.* Matthew ii. 23.

Christ chose not for Himself Jerusalem, the chief city of the kingdom, with its concourse of all peoples, but the poor town of Nazareth, from which He earned the scornful title of the Nazarene. Such is the mind of Christ, ever to choose Himself the lowlier place. How diverse thy mind from His! Yet if thine aim be different from His thou puttest scorn on Him: Him thou exaltest when thou lowerest thyself.

WEDNESDAY

OF THE GOING UP OF CHRIST WITH HIS PARENTS TO THE TEMPLE.

1. *His parents went to Jerusalem every year.*
Luke ii. 41.

Consider how Joseph maintained this pious habit of going up to the Temple to pray, according to the precept of the Law, binding upon every male. See how strictly he fulfilleth the Law, persevering in a habit of piety. Oh, if thou couldest attain to such a habit in the observance of thy rules! For a habit of piety is not merely *habit*, but *perseverance*. If thou wouldest attain it, thou must perform all thy actions with consideration, and reflect upon thy rule. How great were now thy stature in holiness, hadst thou so done from the beginning of thy vocation!

2. *His parents went.* Luke ii. 41.

Consider how not Joseph alone went up to the Temple, but likewise the Blessed Virgin. Yet she was bound by no such obligation, for that this Law had been given to males alone. That it was a good work pertaining to the service of God was motive sufficient unto her. Too niggardly he dealeth with God, who doeth that only which he must do. What were thy wretched fate if God so dealt with thee! Thou then who receivest so much from the mere bounty of God, render to Him somewhat beyond thy bond. Hast thou so done heretofore? wilt thou henceforth? Come then, what shall it be? and when? and what the motive of thy heart therein?

3. Consider how Christ also went in the company of His parents, that He might observe the Law, but also that He might honour the Father in His own house, at the stated season of public worship. Happy those parents in the company of their glorious Son! And

happy thou, if thou have Jesus ever with thee! What consolation canst thou lack when thou hast Jesus? Behold the Child, with what fervour of spirit He hasteneth on! Stir thou the like within thyself, when thou drawest nigh the things of God.

THURSDAY

OF THE SAME GOING UP TO THE TEMPLE.

1. *They went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.* Luke ii. 42.

Consider how Joseph, returning from Egypt, was afraid to go to Jerusalem, for that Archelaus did reign there. But still he reigned. Why now hath he no fear? Because now he is busied with the worship of God. For when that is thy business, thou must put off all fear, and with stout heart pay thy dues to God. To him that thus feareth God no harm will come. So long as thou art intent upon His service, He will see to thy safety.

2. Consider how Christ went up to the Temple when He was twelve years old, at the beginning of the age of discretion, as men commonly judge; that from His earliest years He might shew how all His care was given to the service of God. Ah, if thou hadst followed this example from thy youth, how happy were thy state, how safe would stand thy soul! Grieve then that thou hast come so late to this His service; and now at least do what appertaineth thereto with seriousness and firm resolve. Away with thy lukewarmness!

3. Contemplate the Holy Family engaged in the offices of the Temple: see their modesty and reverence: surmise the affections of their hearts, the thanks they offer for the blessings granted to themselves and all the world: bethink how fervent

are their prayers to procure for mankind such graces as may match those blessings : and how acceptable to God are their offerings. Compare thy prayer with theirs : the posture of thy body, the recollection of thy mind, the fervour of thy spirit, and the like. Mark thy defects, and set them right.

FRIDAY

THE CHILD JESUS TARRIETH BEHIND IN JERUSALEM.

1. *When they had fulfilled the days, as they returned.* Luke ii. 43.

Consider how the parents of Jesus would not return home to Nazareth, though they might have so done, until the fulfilment of the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. So would they observe every tittle of the Law. Be this thine earnest care, and most of all in the law of Divine service. Offer not a maimed sacrifice to God : curtail not the time that belongeth unto Him. Whereon bestowest thou that which thou takest from Him, but on thy senses? Wilt thou be satisfied to have done so, when thou hast fulfilled the days of thy life?

2. *The child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem.* Luke ii. 43.

Consider the affections which moved the heart of Christ to the service of God. For His part He would have tarried ever in His Father's house, and for this end have left even His well-beloved Mother. Duty to God must be preferred to all else. Hence let me learn to value all holy observances prescribed by rule : to stir up my affections unto them, and rather, if it be permitted, add to the time thereof than diminish aught of it.

3. *And Joseph and his mother knew not of it.* Luke ii. 43.

Christ knew well the grief His absence would bring unto Joseph and His Mother, yet it was His will to withdraw Himself: *that He might shew* (as Bede observeth) *that He had another true Father in heaven*, to whom alone in all His works as Saviour He owed subjection, without respect for flesh and blood. Learn then that in the business of thy vocation thou must lay aside the love of parents and friends. They know not the things of the Spirit, and greatly hinder thee. If in these things thou hate not thy father and mother, thou canst not be Christ's disciple. Luke xiv. 26.

SATURDAY

THE PARENTS LOSE AND SEEK THEIR SON.

1. *They, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey.* Luke ii. 44.

Perchance it seemeth strange that the Mother could be separated from the Son she loved so deeply. She endured this loss for that she supposed that others had the enjoyment of His Divine presence, and were drawn by His sweet courtesy. So went she readily without her heart's delight, for the service of her fellows. Now ponder thine own charity. So seldom, so grudgingly, dost thou suffer discomfort for another's sake. Nay, but to serve thy neighbour there be times that thou must leave thy God.

2. *They sought him among their kinsfolk.* Luke ii. 44.

With diligence: with grief: yet with resignation. They *knew* that He was God indeed, and that there was nothing that He did not well. But ah their sighs towards God, towards Jesus! Seekest thou so

for Jesus, when thou hast lost Him? Yet they found Him not among their kinsfolk. Learn thou that God is lost, not found, among thy kinsfolk, amid the affections of thy blood and of thy senses, amid the consolations of thy friends. Such ties centre not the heart on God, but scatter its affections. All that thou givest them, thou takest from Him.

3. *And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem.* Luke ii. 45.

Consider what were their thoughts as they returned: their grief, yet conformity with the will of God, for that they knew that this was done of deep design, to kindle in them more ardent longing for Jesus, and give occasion to merit further grace: their hope of finding Him again. Learn then that God hideth His face even from the especial objects of His love. If He hath withdrawn Himself from thee, go to Jerusalem: settle thyself in interior peace: seek Him with the affections of Mary and of Joseph.

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

HE IS FOUND IN THE TEMPLE AMONG THE DOCTORS.

1. *They found him in the temple.* Luke ii. 46.

They concluded that He would be in that place where His affection was centred. Learn then to seek Jesus in the temple of prayer. Thou findest Him not *upon the mountains of spices*, nor on thy *bed* of carnal delights, nor *in the streets and in the broad ways* of worldly distractions. Nay it is in these that He is lost. In thine afflictions turn not to the creatures, but to prayer and interior recollection. There shalt thou find Jesus.

2. *Sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.* Luke ii. 46.

See again where Christ may be found: among

the doctors. In the things of the soul, none is prudent enough for himself. Prudence biddeth thee to ask questions of thy spiritual director, and to hear him: to ask questions that thou mayest know, to hear that thou mayest do. He is confounded in his own prudence, who either neglecteth to know, or presumeth on his own sufficiency. With a guide thou walkest through the dangerous forest of this world more safely than alone. Therefore, *my son, hear the instruction of thy father . . . for it shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head.* Proverbs i. 8, 9.

3. *And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.* Luke ii. 47.

His Mother saw the admiration of all, and heard their applauding voices, yet with shamefast modesty tempered that great joy which filled her heart to see her Son: she gave not way to light exultation for all the plaudits, nor let a share of glory light upon herself by revealing that she was His Mother. Is it thy custom so to act? Dost not thou reveal that which will bring thee glory among men, and boast thyself at times and take pleasure in speaking of thy family, and thine achievements? Ah then, while thou cravest such vain praise, thou lovest the true glory.

MONDAY

THE WORDS OF THE MOTHER WHEN SHE FOUND HER SON.

1. *Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us.* Luke ii. 48.

The Mother speaketh first: *her loving heart, one saith, could no more be restrained.* She giveth Him no Divine title, which others knew not of His right to bear, but calleth Him, what all men knew Him for,

her Son. She would not speak one word to glorify herself. *This*, said the Carthusian, *is no rebuke, but the plaint of piety and love*. She openeth her grief, but maketh no curious enquiry of the cause thereof. *Why hast thou . . . dealt with us?* she saith, not *with me*, that she may shew how Joseph shared her grief, that so Joseph too may have due praise for love in grieving for the loss of Jesus. By *thus* she sheweth the depth of her grief, as *God so loved the world* betokeneth the depth of Love Divine. Behold in these few words how much she giveth thee to imitate.

2. *Thy father and I . . . sorrowing.* Luke ii. 48.

The Virgin claimeth the first place in speech with Christ, but yieldeth it to Joseph when she cometh to speak of that they have done. Her claim was that of love, her deference was in humility and reverence to him that was head of the family. *Of her profound humility*, saith S. Augustine, *she took the lower place in merit and in rank*. Thou mayest safely strive to be first of all in the love of God; but in humbleness and reverence give place to all; yet not in thy words so much as in lowly inward thinking of thyself.

3. *Have sought thee sorrowing.* Luke ii. 48.

She sheweth how she had sought a remedy for that sorrow. They stayed not in their sorrow for the losing of Jesus, but sought how that sorrow should be asswaged. It sufficeth not to sorrow for the loss of Jesus, unless thou takest pains to find Him. Sometimes He therefore withdraweth Himself that thou mayest seek Him: then rejoiceth He in the earnest care with which thou seekest, and when thou findest giveth thee full measure of joy. Be not then cast down, though thou hast lost Him: seek, and thou shalt find.

TUESDAY

THE SON'S ANSWER TO HIS MOTHER.

1. *How is it that ye sought me?* Luke ii. 49.

These be not words of blame, as though He said : There was no need to seek me, for I withdrew Myself of deep design, and not by chance. Nor meant He that their zeal in seeking Him was wasted : for deeds that be prompted by holy love often win praise, even though there be no need for them. With what loving-kindness, thinkest thou, did He so speak ! What gentle courtesy shewed He to His parents ! Such was the guerdon of their zeal. If thou hast lost Jesus and all the savour of thy prayers, think that this hath come to pass by deep design of God : commit thyself humbly to His governance ; yet seek with all the care thou canst. The time of thy consolation will surely come.

2. *Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?* Luke ii. 49.

The question hath the force of affirmation, as though He said *Ye wist*. Yea, well they wist ; therefore it was there they sought Him. Yet by these words He sheweth also that love He ever bare unto His Father's business : He sheweth how for this father and mother must be left : that this is a debt which overpasseth all others. Imprint this truth upon thy soul, and in the business of God, make generous resolution of cutting off whatever thou holdest dear.

3. *And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.* Luke ii. 50.

Not all the things concerning Christ were revealed at once to the most Blessed Virgin ; as she ever grew in grace, so also in the understanding of mysteries. So it was that she understood not then for what cause Christ at twelve years old revealed His wisdom amid

the doctors : yet asked she no more questions. When she heard that what He did was by the Father's will, at once she found satisfaction. Learn thou to submit thine own judgment. There is no need that thou shouldest follow all the reasons of the deep designs of God. Strive not to trace them, else shalt thou lose thy peace. Enough to know, This is His will.

WEDNESDAY

OF THE GOING DOWN FROM THE TEMPLE.

1. *And he went down with them.* Luke ii. 51.

Listen to Jesus telling of all that had happened to Him in those three days. Behold with what eagerness the Virgin listeneth, observing all these sayings in her heart. Learn thou to *go down*. *O stiffness of thy pride*, saith one, *ever striving to soar above the clouds: go down, I adjure thee, since Jesus went down*; He that would not cast Himself bodily from the pinnacle of the Temple, *went down* therefrom in humbleness of mind.

2. *And was subject unto them.* Luke ii. 51.

Think who was subject, and unto whom! The Creator unto the creature, the Master unto the servant, God unto man. O wondrous obedience. *Blush for shame, thou haughty dust and ashes*, saith S. Bernard, *God humbleth Himself: thou exaltest thyself. O man, if thou disdain to follow man's ensample, it will be no indignity to follow thy Creator.* Is thine inferior preferred to thee, one of lowlier birth, less learning, than thyself? But art thou truly as far removed from him in lineage or in wisdom as God from man? He hath set the example : do thou follow.

3. *And was subject unto them.* Luke ii. 51.

Subject wherein? and how? In basest services: no magnificence was found there in the carpenter's shop. With ease thou mayest imagine what were His tasks. How promptly, humbly, and exactly He performed them! and that not for one day, but till He was thirty years of age. Art thou bidden to do some base and menial offices? There is nothing base that is wrought in the imitation of God: what He doth cannot be base, but hath all baseness purged by His very doing of it. Think such base offices an honour, if thou deem it indeed the highest honour to be made most like to Christ. Lest long service break thy resolution, make generous resolve to be for thy whole life a doorkeeper in the house of God.

THURSDAY

OF THE ADVANCE OF CHRIST IN AGE, WISDOM,
AND GRACE.

1. *The child Jesus advanced in . . . age.* Luke ii. 52 (R.V. margin).

He might have taken human nature at full strength and man's estate. He chose to assume it at the stage of infancy and pass through each age, that to all ages He might be example. He advanced in age and in the power of manhood, that He might acquire the strength to endure more grievous sufferings for me. To this end He gave nourishment to His body. Alas! How far I stand from Him! I nourish my body for carnal delight, not for the service of God, to do or suffer what is hard for His sake. Spare me, good Lord: by thine example I will now amend my ways.

2. *Advanced in wisdom . . . and in grace.* Luke ii. 52 (R.V. margin).

Full was He of wisdom and of grace from the first moment of His conception. Yet outwardly He grew as age increased, displaying more and more to the eyes of men His wisdom and His grace. Learn that as thou growest in age, thou shouldest likewise grow in wisdom and in grace. In years thou art grown, but ah how little in righteousness! Thou hast acquired human knowledge, but scarce touched the rudiments of grace and righteousness. How shalt thou stand when thou art asked *how* thou hast lived, and not how long? what thou hast *done*, and not what thou hast learned?

3. *With God and man.* Luke ii. 52.

With man, for that by ever more surpassing excellence of deed he won men's approbation: with God, for that these same works were fitted to increase His grace, were such an increase possible. So that in all things He united the good pleasure of God and the edification of man. Do thou the like, that by thy works thou mayest please God, and that they that see them may *glorify thy Father which is in heaven*. To look to men alone is vanity; to look to God alone hath some substance: but best of all it is to look to God and man.

FRIDAY

THE WORKS OF CHRIST TILL HE WAS THIRTY YEARS
OF AGE.

1. Consider how Christ passed those years in contemplation. Think how He dealt with the Father concerning the matter of man's salvation, settled the polity of the Church Militant, wept over human sin,

placated the Father's wrath, besought our pardon. Doubt not that thou and all thy sins were present to His contemplation. No merit of thine was here. Such remembrance of thee was the act of His pure goodness. Cast then upon this goodness all thy debts. Bewail them, beg for pardon through those tears of His. See that in future thou be a joy to Him, and not a grief.

2. Consider the consolation which by His converse He gave to His most holy Mother and to Joseph; and how we may believe that He chiefly spake of the goodness and mercy of God, and of that work of salvation which He had come to do. Consider the sweet savour of such converse unto each, and the affections of their hearts therein. Learn what should be the matter of thine own conversation, somewhat which may bring consolation or holy thoughts unto thy neighbour. If it be not such, thou wilt either stumble into things injurious, or at least waste thy time. Hast thou so spoken hitherto?

3. Consider how He worked with His hands. *Is not this the carpenter?* Mark vi. 3. In this way we may believe that He helped Joseph to win bread. So lowly a life did Jesus lead yet it was to thee, and not to Him those words were spoken: *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread*, Genesis iii. 19. Wilt thou then love thine ease? He careth not that He may not yet begin to preach, or work miracles for the salvation of mankind. In His judgment He doth enough, since He doth what He knoweth to be God's will. Learn thou to do that which obedience biddeth: yea, though thou seemest to be doing nought, or to have occupation insufficient for thy talents. Thou dost enough, if thou dost that which thou knowest to please God in the path of obedience.

SATURDAY

OF THE VIRTUES TO BE GATHERED FROM THE YOUTH OF CHRIST.

1. Consider that the whole life of Christ led to the death of the Cross, and that therefore it was His will to choose the sterner paths of righteousness. Herein let *humility* hold the first place. He loved to be unknown; concealed His Divinity, His wisdom, His miraculous powers, led a hidden life in Nazareth, in lowly cot, unknown to fame; occupied in acts of humblest service. How standest thou herein? Is there no boasting of thy cleverness and knowledge? Seekest thou not to be seen of men? Dost thou not avoid solitude? and shudder at abasement? How little like art thou to Christ!

2. Be the next virtue *obedience*. (1) Towards God; for He did always those things that pleased Him, so that in this respect His every action was of obedience. Think then how greatly to be prized is this virtue, the value whereof Christ willed to be added to every act of His. And thou canst be His follower in this regard in every action thy vocation demandeth of thee. For thou knowest for certain that *this* is the command of God. (2) Towards men: *He was subject unto them*, not in things highly esteemed, for which no opportunity was granted, but in acts of lowliness: and all with perseverance, promptness, and cheerfulness. Thou mayest well believe there is some excellent quality in this *obedience* which Christ shewed forth so constantly for so many years. Consider the character of thine obedience, not in the act thereof so much as in thy promptness, thy will, the denial of thine own judgment.

3. Be the third virtue His constant patience, in poverty; in the lack even of things necessary, in sorrows and contempt. Such a life He judged the

better and more pleasing unto God, and thus He made choice thereof. O the perversity of the judgment of men, to whom this life of poverty is the worst of evils! In avoidance of suffering they lose their souls, which in *patience* alone may be *possessed*. What be thy sufferings? Light yea, naught they be, if thou compare them with His! What then shalt be thy resolve?

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE DEATH OF CHRIST DECREED BY THE MOST HOLY TRINITY.

1. *What do we?* John xi. 47.

Suppose thyself present while the most Holy Trinity taketh counsel: Must man perish as he hath deserved? Or may he be redeemed by the death of God in manhood? "What shall we do?" Suppose God's Justice present in the court, making the most of man's offence: (1) for that he acted in contempt of God, transgressing His command; (2) for that the command was easy to be observed; (3) for that he acted of malice, being, as he was, illuminated, sustained by grace, with no rebellion of the passions; (4) for that he was unmoved either by the severity of the penalty assigned to transgression or by the example of the fallen angels. Therefore he deserveth not mercy, but justice. Let such consideration move thee to acknowledge the gravity of sin, to detest it, to fear God's justice.

2. Yet suppose that Mercy too was there: (1) acknowledging all the pleas of justice, yet pleading in excuse that man was but a fragile being, formed of the dust, and tempted of the devil even to contempt and hatred of God. (2) So would she plead that he should not be destroyed: as for the

angels, not *all* of them had perished; but this would be the ruin of the whole human race: if man were condemned, the devil would triumph; God's Name would be the Rigorous, not the Merciful, for hitherto there had been no place for His mercy, neither henceforth could such be found; in fine, to be placated would beseem His goodness. Shew thyself then to God as one that needeth His mercy: invoke the same, hope for it, give praise and thanks.

3. *It is expedient . . . that one man should die . . . and that the whole nation perish not.* John xi. 50.

Take this for the judgment of the most Holy Trinity. God ever inclineth more to mercy than to justice; inasmuch as His justice is called forth by our wickedness, but His mercy is proper to His own goodness. *Expedient* verily, for the manifestation of the glory of God, and for man's salvation. Acknowledge then this goodness, adore it, praise it, love it, fear to offend it, set thy hope upon it. Yet consider likewise the obligation that it layeth upon thee—of love—of service.

MONDAY

THE COUNCIL OF THE PHARISEES AGAINST CHRIST.

1. *Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we?* John xi. 47.

Who now are gathered together? The enemies of Christ, envious for His fame, for the miracles that He doeth, for His honour with the people. What sentence of equity could be looked for from judges blind with hate and envy? And wherefore are they gathered together? *That they may take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.* Was this what Christ deserved,

who went about doing good to all? What wouldest thou have done, hadst thou been there? How would thy zeal have flashed out against the wicked! Turn thy weapons on thyself. Often hast thou conspired against Him. Self-love hath gathered a council of the passions. Indulge them, and thou givest sentence against thy Lord. Is this what He deserveth for all the benefits He hath done unto thee? Ah, thy ingratitude!

2. *This man doeth many miracles.* John xi. 47.

So vile they count Him, they deign not to speak His Name. The first step towards destruction is to make light of God. They confess that He doeth many miracles, yet seek to destroy Him, fearing for their earthly dominion, setting that above their God. Ah, madness, theirs and thine! Hath God been counted vile by thee? And if not so, yet how often hast thou failed to mark His dignity, and hast preferred before Him the vile delights of thine own passions! Lay hold on this truth: thy one true good is to love God and serve Him alone.

3. *It is expedient . . . that one man should die.* John xi. 50.

Innocent, Prophet, miracle-worker, Messiah, unaccused, unheard, unconvicted: yet it is expedient, sayest thou, that He should die, that thy dominion perish not? O criminous judge, it is God's sentence, not thine, that maketh it expedient. God useth thine unjust decree for the benefit of mankind. Such is the very nature and property of God, to raise up highest good from lowest ill. So mayest thou be an imitator of God, if from the scorn of men thou raisest up the grace of humility, from afflictions patience, from creatures the praise of God. *All things work together for good to them that so love God,* Romans viii. 28.

TUESDAY

THE SUPPER MADE FOR CHRIST IN BETHANY BY MARTHA AND MARY.

1. *There they made him a supper; and Martha served.* John xii. 2.

This supper was made in the house of Simon the leper, for a thank-offering unto Christ, after that Lazarus was raised up from the dead. Martha then served Christ in the house of another. The lover everywhere layeth hold on opportunity of serving the beloved. To such occupation no place or house is foreign: freely she taketh on herself the servant's task. How many such opportunities dost thou let pass! If thou wert indeed a lover, how wouldest thou welcome each and all, at any time, in any place! Hadst thou but done this always, how great a mass of merit would now be thine. Yet take it not amiss that others sit in quietness, while thou art wearied with serving. To one is appointed this path of merit, to another that. Thou hast thine own appointed way: therein thou pleasest God.

2. *Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.* John xii. 3.

Once before, at her conversion, she had anointed the feet of Christ. Now she doth the like in thankfulness for the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Mark her humility as, in company of others, she lieth prostrate at the feet of Christ, her self-contempt, her love, the thankfulness which moveth her to sacrifice her most precious possession unto God. See the good pleasure of Christ; how precious to Him is that which she hath done! So bring not thou for thine oblation deeds which cost thee little, the toll of duty and no more. Very precious are the gifts God giveth thee: bring deeds made precious by the affections of thy inmost heart.

3. *And the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.* John xii. 3.

We are . . . a sweet savour of Christ (2 Corinthians ii. 15); so at the least we ought to be. The *odour* of our good deeds is the edification of our neighbour. A high degree of virtue can fill a whole house with such an odour. The greater thou art, the more should be the perfume of thy deeds. The lesser sort follow the example of their betters. But if thou set an ill example, or deridest that which is good, take heed that God upbraid thee not, saying *ye have made our savour to be abhorred* (Exodus v. 21).

WEDNESDAY

THE MURMURING OF THE DISCIPLES AT THE MAGDALENE'S OUTPOURING OF THE OINTMENT.

1. *But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying.* Matthew xxvi. 8.

They saw not the inmost affections of the Magdalene, and thus they murmured at her for wasteful indiscretion. There will never fail some to misjudge the virtues of the righteous, to cavil and to misinterpret, from ignorance or from malice. Even good men sometimes pass censure with zeal rather than discretion: if thou suffer therefrom, what of it? If thou wilt be a good Christian, prepare thy soul for this. Regard God's judgments and thou wilt despise the judgments of men. They look upon the countenance: God beholdeth the heart. Beware that thou set not an evil interpretation on the acts of others when thou canst find one that is good.

2. *Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot.* John xii. 4.

In John's Gospel only Judas murmureth: according to Matthew and Mark there be others also.

S. Austin combining them averreth that *the rest were persuaded by Judas' words*. One murmurer oft-times will make a swarm. See that thou be neither leader nor follower herein. If such be thy resolve and thou wouldest keep it, habituate thyself to kindly judgment.

3. *For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.* Matthew xxvi. 9.

Behold the cloke of his iniquity: as though he cared for the poor, who was a thief, and looked for an occasion for stealing had the ointment only been sold. So oftentimes are evil passions clad in goodly garments. Thou wouldest have thine anger accounted zeal; thy particular friendships, charity; thine earthly self-indulgence, fruitful converse. Not thus shall thy heart be cloked from the eye of God.

THURSDAY

CHRIST DEFENDETH MARY.

1. *When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.* Matthew xxvi. 10.

Mary hath ever an advocate in Jesus; before, when Martha accused her of sloth, and now when Judas murmureth against her. Virtue hath ever God for its protector. Great herein will have been the consolation of Mary, still but a neophyte in the way of virtue, and great her encouragement. Why art thou cast down by the perverse judgments of men, their murmuring, their censuring? Wilt thou for these forsake the way of virtue? God forbid. On, on! Put thy trust in God. He will be thy defence. The time will come for the truth to be unveiled, to thy great and ever greater consolation.

2. *For ye have the poor always with you ; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.* Matthew xxvi. 11, 12.

Thus the Lord disentangled the craftiness of their murmuring about the care of the poor. Though He knew well Judas' intent to steal, He cast not the blame on him : that thou mayest learn not to defend thyself by revealing another's guilt ; that were a sorry proof of thine own innocence. Thereafter He praiseth Mary's good intent for that *she is come aforehand to anoint His body* (Mark xiv. 8), since she had learned, from the word of Christ or by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that after death she would not anoint it. So then services that be done aforehand are well pleasing to God : it may be that no later occasion will be given. Set a value then on every offered grace, seize every opportunity : thou knowest not if there will be another.

3. *Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.* Matthew xxvi. 13.

Mary kept silence before the murmuring of Judas, and behold, the Lord calleth all the faithful to celebrate her praise. So pleasing unto Him is humble silence amid calumny, since *he that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (Luke xviii. 14) : so precious in His sight is the devout consideration of His Passion. And thou too shalt please Him well by recollection of His death and holy affections towards His Body present in the most Holy Eucharist.

FRIDAY

GOING UP TO JERUSALEM HE PREDICTETH HIS PASSION.

1. *And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed.* Mark x. 32.

If the disciples were thus amazed, Christ must have hasted beyond His wont. Wherefore? (1) To shew the ready will that bare Him towards His Passion. To work His miracles He went unhasting, but to suffer pain, with quickened steps. Love gave Him wings. Alas my sluggishness, my obstinate refusal of the arduous task! Ah, draw me after Thee. (2) To shew Himself going before them on the way to toil and grief. Why then wilt thou go before all men in the quest for honours and delights? How far art thou from the spirit of Christ? Well mayest thou marvel with the Apostles: well also mayest thou follow Him with them.

2. *Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests.* Matthew xx. 18.

As oft before, so now again, He predicteth His Passion to the Apostles. Wherefore again and yet again? (1) Because what a man loveth that he hath ever in mind, and loveth to speak thereof. Therefore thou keepest not Christ's Passion in mind, because thou lovest not to suffer. Yet suffer thou must: necessity is laid upon thee. Suffer not like one of the beasts of the earth; remember Jesus in His Passion that thou mayest love thy suffering. (2) That by His own example He might encourage the disciples in His train to suffer something likewise. For suffer he must, whosoever he be that goeth up with Christ, whether to the heights of virtue or to the heavenly Jerusalem. Yet is he not alone in his suffering: he hath Christ for his companion, the very thought of whom asswageth all his torment.

3. *And they understood none of these things.*
Luke xviii. 34.

They still minded earthly things, and made much of that the world esteemeth, pleasures, honours, fame, and the like; they shrank from contempt, insult and grief. The soul that mindeth earthly things perceiveth not that which God esteemeth. Why art thou so dry in meditating of the life and death of Christ? Because thou esteemest not nor lovest contempt and afflictions, but only honours and vanities and sensual delights. Bewail thy savourless mind, and learn from the best of masters how to suffer. *The disciple is not above his master* (Matthew x. 24).

SATURDAY

THE PREPARATION FOR THE SOLEMN ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

1. *And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart.* Matthew xx. 17.

Jesus knew full well that the Jews had determined to *take him by subtilty, and kill him* (Matthew xxvi. 4). None the less He willed to make a solemn entry into Jerusalem with all the pomp foretold of the Messiah by the Prophets. (1) That He might shew Himself to be the very Messiah and give occasion that He might be known as such, that men might be inexcusable if they gave Him not due honour. God giveth graces unto all; but all receive them not. Take thou good heed to receive them as they are offered: if thou neglect them, be afraid. (2) That He might shew that the Jews could not kill Him as they had determined, unless He willed it. All that thou hast determined dependeth upon God. Therefore in all things commit thyself unto His governance.

2. *Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say The Lord hath need of them.* Matthew xxi. 2, 3.

(1) He sheweth His Divinity, appointing for a sign things beyond human gaze. Believe thyself ever in His sight: adore, and love, and fear. (2) He exerciseth that dominion which He hath over all created things. Thou also art subject thereunto. Suffer Him to have dominion over thee. When by interior monition He warneth thee to break thine appetite, to subdue thy will, to tame thy tongue, imagine these to be as asses for His service, and hear Him say *The Lord hath need of them.*

3. *And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt.* Matthew xxi. 6, 7.

The Apostles shew perfect obedience, *as He commanded.* The owner of the beasts sheweth the like readiness. Having heard that *the Lord hath need of them*, he enquireth not who they be, nor by whom sent, nor yet the reason, nor the time. Behold in them and him alike the good will to do as the Lord pleaseth. Examine thyself: is thine a good will, ready and prompt to receive suggestion of good things? Dispose thyself to have a better will.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF CHRIST INTO JERUSALEM.

1. *The disciples . . . put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way. . . .* Matthew xxi. 7, 8.

Consider one by one the offices of the disciples and

the humble duties of the multitudes, as they are set down in Scripture. Who was it that stirred up that multitude, who knew right well that the rulers had conspired against Christ? Who but God, who moveth the heart and stablisheth it against all terrors? What could they hope from the poor Jesus and His poor disciples? Nay rather, they might well fear the indignation of the rulers. They were moved by nought save their reverence for Christ, aroused by His miracles and the new wonder of Lazarus raised from the grave. Ah, if thou couldest but esteem God as He deserveth, how wouldest thou render Him thy duties! How bravely wouldest thou contend against thyself and the evil council of thy passions!

2. *The multitudes . . . cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh. . . .* Matthew xxi. 9.

Consider in that multitude the conjunction of the three parts of true devotion: the heart, or the affection wherewith they escorted Christ; the tongue, or the words wherewith they praised Him; the hands, or the action wherewith they cut down branches. That is not true devotion which containeth not these three; for unless they all be offered there is no oblation of thy whole self. Compare thine own devotion. See whether thy words and works proceed from the affection of thy heart: whether thou doest as thou speakest; or if the voice be Jacob's voice, but the hands the hands of Esau. If thou conjoin these three, thou wilt be wholly God's.

3. *Behold, thy King cometh unto thee.* Matthew xxi. 5.

Imagine thyself bidden to see this great sight: *Behold, thy King*; even so, by every right. Therefore thou owest Him all manner of subjection. He *cometh unto thee*: cometh to do thee good. On thee He will spend all His thoughts, His care, His

life, His blood, that in thy poverty He may enrich thee, in thy peril protect thee, in thy wretchedness promote thee to a kingdom. Lift up for Him the gates of thy heart, that the King of glory may come in. Acknowledge and adore thy King : offer to Him thy intellect, thy will, and thine affections.

MONDAY

THE ENVIOUS WORDS OF THE PHARISEES.

1. *Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.* John xii. 19.

Consider the envy of the Pharisees. Having willed His death, how ill can they bear to see Him honoured! Yet they must needs confess that they prevail nothing. Be not cast down if thou sufferest envy. It will prevail nothing, save to torment the envious soul. Be not envious, lest thou thyself be tormented. The whole world followeth Him, they say, exceeding the truth that they may sharpen their own mad rage. Would that it were true indeed that all would follow Him—unbelievers, heretics, Jews! Now be *thou* foremost to follow in His train. Be not envious if some other draw to himself applause or crowds.

2. *Some of the Pharisees . . . said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.* Luke xix. 39.

Behold the inventiveness of jealousy! Desiring to hinder the praises of Christ, it dareth to ask Christ Himself to forbid them. They call Him "Master," to pave a way for their demand by flattery. And what is this demand? That He should rebuke His disciples. Wherefore? Is it then a crime to praise the Lord? But envy seeth nought aright, and findeth cause for blame even in actions that are holy and

good. Far be from me this and every passion, which perverteth the mind and blindeth it.

3. *And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.* Luke xix. 40.

Those whom God hath moved, He would say, will not be still : and if they were, God could yet stir the hardest human heart to give Him glory. Even so it is. No heart is so hard that God cannot break or soften it : not even mine. Hitherto I have resisted Him. Alas, what have I done? How oft hath He made known His will, and I have resisted it ! Be afraid, O my soul.

TUESDAY

HE WEEPETH OVER THE CITY OF JERUSALEM

1. *He beheld the city and wept over it.* Luke xix. 41.

Wherefore tears in this full tide of praise? He beholdeth Jerusalem, and therein the whole world. He seeth all men's wickedness, yea, even thine. He seeth how His Passion will prove to be the fall of many, through their own malice. Christ could have saved us by His own omnipotence : He chooseth rather that we shall co-operate with the graces He provideth. If we use them not, we shall perish. Consider if thou hast ever given Him occasion to weep over thee. Acknowledge His love towards thee. Yet that is not enough, unless thou also co-operate.

2. *If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace.* Luke xix. 42.

He sheweth the cause for which He weepeth : it is the blindness of the people who knew Him not for

the Messiah ; and from that blindness sprang hatred, envy, ingratitude, and every evil. Therefore the devil laboureth to cover our hearts with blindness, that we may fail to see the exceeding goodness of grace and the exceeding evil of sin, that we may pay no heed to Divine inspirations, lest we follow them. This he doeth *in this thy day*, the day of this life, the only day which is ours. Then shall follow *the day of the Lord*. Take heed then how thou spendest thy day, that thou mayest have no cause to dread the day of the Lord. Lament thy former blindness ; and now at last open thine eyes, that thou mayest know the graces given thee for eternal life.

3. *The days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee. . . . Luke xix. 43.*

He predicteth the overthrow of the city at the hands of the Romans in punishment for their sins, and chiefly for their sins against Himself. Sins are indeed the cause of every woe, and their product is matter for destruction by the avenging wrath of God. In these words is shewn the misery of the man who hath misused the time of his visitation and of grace, when he cometh to die. His enemies, the devils, will compass him round : his past sins will keep him in ; they will lay even with the ground all the pomps and vanities of his devising, because he hath misused the time of his visitation. Behold then how it behoveth thee to make good use of grace while there is time.

WEDNESDAY

JUDAS MAKETH A BARGAIN WITH THE RULERS TO BETRAY
JESUS.

1. *Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests. Matthew xxvi. 14.*

Then, after that covetousness had found a way to

enter into him when he saw the outpouring of the ointment; or else perchance, when he knew that the chief priests were gathered together to wreak their hate on Christ. *One of the twelve*, stablished in the dignity of the Apostolate. *Judas* is mentioned by name, lest others bear suspicion. *Iscaiot*, lest any think of Thaddæus. *To the chief priests*, the bitterest foes of Christ, intent upon His death. Behold the growth of the passions of the soul, and their final end if they be not mortified. See Judas (1) aflame with avarice; (2) murmuring at the waste of the ointment; (3) beginning to hate Christ; (4) selling Him for a price; (5) not to a friend, but to His mortal foes. Stand then in fear of thy passions, and so lay to the axe of mortification.

2. *And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?* Matthew xxvi. 15.

What is the precious treasure offered by the wicked merchantman? The Son of God. But how little worth He deemeth Him, when he leaveth to the buyers the determination of the price! when he careth not even to give Him a name! Is God then of no account? Yet how often hast thou set Him a lower value still! And what the value that He set on thee? He gave Himself: He gave His life. If thou be ought but a beast insensate, what wilt thou give for Him? Thy worship, thy love.

3. *And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.* Matthew xxvi. 15.

The price of a beast, or of the cheapest slave. Could God be so despised? Yet that selfsame paltry price was part of God's deep counsel. *In being sold so cheap He willed to buy us dear* (saith S. Paulinus). *Yea, He Himself is the more precious to us for that poor price, since He willeth to be counted cheap, that He may be bought by any and all.* Thou canst not give great things for God: why then, give little

things, give earnest care in smallest matters. For such a price right willingly He selleth Himself to thee.

THURSDAY

THE PASCHAL SUPPER.

1. *Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith . . . I will keep the passover at thy house.* Matthew xxvi. 18.

Jesus in His poverty hath not wherewithal to celebrate the Passover. And dost thou claim sufficiency for all desires of thy spirit, yea and of thy senses too? The Head of the household hath but to indicate His pleasure: *I will keep the passover at thy house*; the other straightway consenteth, and busieth himself in service. Is the mere indication of God's pleasure enough for thee? Dost thou straightway consent? Or must He sometimes compel thee like a slave? Then thou lovest both the value and the merit of what thou doest.

2. *With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you.* Luke xxii. 15.

This passover, the last of His earthly life, to be followed so soon by His bitter Passion and shameful Death! Yea, even because He knoweth that it will be followed by that death to which He ever aspired for love of thee. The nearer His Passion, the greater His joy. If thou thinkest thyself a lover of Christ and shunnest suffering, thou liest unto thyself. The very proof of love is suffering, and the more so if it be endured with joy or looked for with desire. O pampered soul! Never shalt thou correspond with Christ's desires, unless thine be like to His.

3. Many believe that on that night Christ observed all the ceremonies of the law. If that be so, con-

sider how without doubt He also contemplated their significance. In the lamb, *killed, flayed, and roast*, He beheld Himself ready to be killed, flayed with the scourge, consumed with the fire of love. In the *cutting* of the flesh into portions, yet so that they should not *break a bone thereof*, He beheld all His own bones out of joint, but yet unbroken: in the *eating in haste*, the haste and fury of His adversaries: in the *bitter herbs*, the bitterness of the gall: in the *staff in His hand*, His cross. Imagine the affections of His heart whereby He offered Himself to suffer all these things: strive thou to imitate them.

FRIDAY

THE WASHING OF THE DISCIPLES' FEET.

1. *Knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands . . . he riseth from supper . . . and began to wash the disciples' feet.* John xiii. 3—5.

Where is the connection between this and that? He knoweth that all hath been given into His hands, and He beginneth to wash their feet. To know the depth of His humility take knowledge of the height of dignity which He renounceth. Is it not higher than the highest thou canst imagine? Now measure thine own vileness, thou that refusest humiliations. *All hath been given into his hands.* But thou stealest from Him part of that gift, if thou wilt not let Him have thy feet, which are thine affections. Whither turn they aside? After the flocks of thy companions? after created things? Bring back those wanderers: place them in His hands, that He may wash from them the dust and dirt of contact with created things, and guide them with a shepherd's hand.

2. *He riseth from supper and laid aside his garments.* John xiii. 4.

He taketh a towel, prepareth water, washeth, wipeth. All this He doeth alone. Why is not one of the disciples allowed to help? He admitted them to share in all that was of high esteem, to be the sons of God, and heirs of His Kingdom, to wield powers of absolution and of exorcism : in a task of lowliness He goeth before them or ever they be aware. Such are the humble. Thou art not truly humble unless thou contend to be first in lowly service. To be first, do I say? Perchance thou art not at pains even to follow others : thou gazest and takest thine ease. Believe me, one day thou shalt gaze from afar, when they go first to their reward, and thou, too late, shalt wail.

3. *Then cometh he to Simon Peter. . . .* John xiii. 6.

On the one side Peter beholdeth his own vileness, on the other the majesty of God : amazed he crieth, *Lord, dost thou wash my feet?* Weigh well each word. *Lord* of the whole world, and *my Lord* ; *thou*, to whom belongeth all power and dominion ; *my feet*, the feet of the lowest of Thy servants, and a guilty sinner. Stand thou amazed likewise for that Jesus so oft doth for thee the selfsame office, washeth thee, not with water but with His Blood, with the grace that by His Blood He merited. Yet this is the one thing thou needest, so that if He wash thee not, thou mayest have no part with Him. Say then with Peter, *Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head* : not my affections only but also my thoughts and my deeds, that all alike may be clean in Thy sight.

SATURDAY

CHRIST'S ADMONITION TO THE DISCIPLES AFTER THAT
HE HAD WASHED THEIR FEET.

1. *Know ye what I have done to you? . . . If I then, your Lord and your Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.* John xiii. 12, 14.

(1) By the question He recallesh their attention. Verily the humility of Christ is worthy thereof. (2) That which He had already shewn them by His example He now explaineth by His word. That teacher effecteth most whose words are animated by his deeds. (3) A vigorous argument. *I have washed your feet: ye ought to wash one another's.* Soundly He concludeth from the greater to the less. (4) He calleth Himself Lord and Master for the fuller persuasion of their hearts. What of thy heart? A stock thou art, if unconvinced; a stone, if unmoved.

2. *For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done.* John xiii. 15.

Behold the true motive of the acts of Christ, that they be thine example. If thou imitate them not, thou takest away their life, as much as in thee lieth: thou spoilest them of their purpose, for examples are no more examples if there be no imitation of them. Be not thou thus injurious to the acts of Christ. See also how kind a Lord thou hast, who layeth on thee no yoke that He hath not first borne Himself: how kind a Master, who draweth thee on so gently, ever performing the act before He layeth down the precept. This then is the secret of good deeds, that thou attend in all things to Christ's example, that thou mayest do as He hath done. Here thou hast the short and certain rule of perfection.

3. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* John xiii. 17.

Here is plain truth taught: not he that knoweth many things is happy, but he that doeth what he knoweth. *It is no great thing, saith S. Cyril of Alexandria, to know the way of virtue, but to follow it with earnest care.* It is not enough then to know the examples which the Lord hath given. Such knowledge is but an obligation to follow them. For (Luke xii. 47) the servant which knoweth his Lord's will is beaten with many stripes if he doeth not according to His will. Perpend thou all the light which thou hast had, and all the knowledge of what is good. Ah, if thou didst accordingly, how happy wouldest thou be!

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE INSTITUTION OF THE VENERABLE EUCHARIST.

1. *Take, eat; this is my body.* Matthew xxvi. 26.

First believe thou with a lively faith that in the most Holy Eucharist are set forth the Flesh and Blood of Christ, His human Soul, His Deity and all that it compriseth. Marvel at the wisdom of God, which hath found out this new way of giving us Himself. Be amazed, and give praise to His omnipotence, which in this sacrament giveth all in one moment of time. Acknowledge the infinite love whereby He effecteth this. As the Father *so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son*, so likewise did the Son, and gave Himself to be with us even unto the end of the world. O the wonder of the love of God! How great a thing was His care for thee in His Incarnation! But how much greater is this, that He cometh to thee now again as once He came into the world, and bringeth with Him the selfsame benefits! What wilt thou render unto the Lord?

2. *The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread. . . .* 1 Cor. xi. 23.

Consider the time of the institution of the Eucharist. It was the very moment in which a plot was laid against His life, and the hatred of the Jews was raging against Him. The many waters of persecution could not drown His love. Even when we are enemies, He loveth us. All the torments which were now so near, the cross, the shame, did not separate Christ from thee, but united Him yet closer to thee through the sacrament of love and unity. *Who shall separate thee from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril?* Nay, conclude with deep and burning love, *In all these things I shall be more than conqueror through him that loved me.*

3. *And as they did eat, Jesus took bread.* Mark xiv. 22.

Consider whom Jesus chose for guests. The Apostles, and, among them, as is most commonly believed, Judas also. How diverse a company! They received the sacrament not only with their mouths but with the fervent devotion of their spirits: he with the mouth alone, while his spirit was intent on that betrayal. See him like some wild beast, his fierce heart untamed even by this food of love; and mark how sins follow each his fellow, like links in a chain, unless that passion which is their first progenitor be timely crushed.

MONDAY

CHRIST AT THE SUPPER MAKETH KNOWN THE TRAITOR.

1. *Jesus . . . was troubled in spirit, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.* John xiii. 21.

The Spirit of Jesus was troubled with bitter sorrow. And the cause thereof was the dread crime which Judas, His Apostle, His familiar friend, was to commit. Nothing is left untried whereby he may be saved from carrying out the intention of his heart. Christ sheweth Himself to have foreknowledge of the betrayal, that Judas may not imagine his wickedness to be hidden from Him. He refraineth from naming the traitor; that he may not ruin his good name; that the other disciples may not be stirred against him; that by such gentleness Judas may be led back to loyalty, lest, if he be openly convicted, it may but augment his shamelessness. When all this profiteth nothing, he giveth the traitor's token: *He that dippeth his hand with me . . .* (Matthew xxvi. 23). He threateneth him with the *woe* of eternal damnation. O goodness of God! O hardness of the sinful heart! Lord, let not my heart be hardened against the many inspirations that thou sendest me.

2. *And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?* Matthew xxvi. 22.

All are troubled at that word, One of you (S. Chrysostom). Wherefore? (1) *Not from a guilty conscience, but from the consideration of human changefulness and the uncertainty which ariseth therefrom* (S. Leo). Knowing nothing against themselves, they yet stood in fear of their own weakness. Put not overmuch trust in thyself. Peter fell through self-confidence. (2) *Fearing that their knowledge of their own hearts might prove false* (S. Leo). Though a man know nothing against himself, yet is he not thereby justified. Stand thou in fear, and say, *Cleanse thou me from my secret faults*. Judas in shamelessness asketh the selfsame question. Ask thyself of the pretences thou devisest lest suspicion fall on thee. Mark the gentleness of Christ's answer, *Thou hast said*. No word of his guilt and

treachery! What is thine answer to him that hath offended thee? the words, the look, the tone?

3. *He then . . . went immediately out; and it was night. And, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified.* John xiii. 30, 31.

Satan having entered into him suffered him not to await the time of prayer, *fearing that it might light a spark in his heart and draw him back to better things* (S. Cyril). [See how the devil seeketh to dissuade his victims from prayer: and conclude that prayer is the most effectual remedy against temptation.] When Judas went out, Christ was glorified: *for now the wicked Judas had left him and the Saints remained in his company* (S. Austin), as who should say that the sole presence of the wicked obscured the glory of Christ. Thou then, who livest in company with the Saints, take heed to thine own life, that it dim not Christ's glory.

TUESDAY

THE STRIFE OF THE DISCIPLES

1. *There was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.* Luke xxii. 24.

Hearing of the Master's death, straightway they began to enquire which of them should be accounted the greatest, that he might play the master over the rest (Euthymius). (1) How quickly our affections change! So lately *exceeding sorrowful* at the tidings of the betrayal of Christ, now they are fallen into ambition. Take thou heed that thou be not thus infirm in thy good purposes. Wavering affections betoken weak virtue. (2) Consider who they be that strive. Yea, even in the school of Christ, the Master of humility. (3) And what is the question in dispute? Not which should truly be greatest, but *which should*

be so accounted, in the sight of men. The vanity of such glory! And thou — wilt thou be, or be accounted, great?

2. *He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger. Luke xxii. 26.*

Behold the medicine for the cure of all ambition. Every sin is best cured by practising its contrary virtue. Dost thou deem thyself higher than another in office, or power, or knowledge? Be as the younger. This the law of Christ enjoineth, this His example confirmeth. *I am among you as he that serveth.* They that abase themselves are in truth the greatest: others art but so accounted. Believest thou this? Wherefore then doth not thine anxious striving follow thy belief? Why seekest thou for honours, office, position, and the teacher's chair.

3. *And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me. Luke xxii. 29.*

Take thou this word for thy motive to subdue ambition, to follow after humility. The Father hath appointed a kingdom to the Son by the way of humility and the Cross. *He humbled himself . . . wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a kingdom (Phil. ii. 8, 9). He appointeth* as by a last will and testament, which may not be undone. Then all those standards whereby till now thou hast guided thy life are mere delusion. Here is the one standard which remaineth firm: *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke xiv. 11).*

WEDNESDAY

CHRIST'S DISCOURSE AFTER THE SUPPER

1. *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. John xv. 9.*

The discourse is long and meriteth to be oft

perused. Three things especially commended He therein. The first is love toward God. (1) Such love must be no light and casual affection, but one that abideth perseveringly. (2) Then, to lead us thereunto He setteth forth His own love toward us. *So have I loved you*, freely, for no merit of yours, *As the Father hath loved me*, yea, with love as pure and strong as His. Cannot He that so loveth rightly ask our love? (3) What love-token wilt thou give Him then? There is but one He asketh: *If ye love me, keep my commandments*. How easy a behest! *His commandments are not grievous* (1 John v. 3). Givest thou this token? Dost thou observe His commandments? What reward shall he have that loveth thus? (1) *I . . . will manifest myself to him* (John xiv. 21) in giving him ever new light. (2) *My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*. Perpend the promises.

2. *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you*. John xiii. 34.

In the second place He commendeth love toward our neighbour. Without that there is no love of God (1 John iv. 20). *A new commandment*, the foundation of the new law, even the law of love, wherein, under Christ the Head *we all are one body . . . and every one members one of another* (Romans xii. 5). *New*: not that the command to love is new, but the command to love *as He* hath loved, freely, enemies as well as friends, through torment, even to the Cross, for our salvation. How far art thou from this perfection of love! If thou wilt be His disciple, enkindle such a love within thee. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another* (John xiii. 35).

3. *Ask, and ye shall receive*. John xvi. 24.

In the third place He commendeth prayer. (1) He enkindleth confidence in asking: *Whatsoever ye shall*

ask . . . will I do for you. (2) He enlargeth such confidence, in that it is a Father to whom they make request, *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father*, the good and mighty Father. (3) He teacheth that our request shall be for *any thing*, that is (as S. Austin saith) for some real *thing* which will conduce to the acquisition of eternal felicity. (4) He teacheth them to ask *in His name*, or by His merits, for they alone (as Rupert saith) can bear our prayer on high. (5) Our prayer must be directed to the glory of God: *that the Father may be glorified in the Son* (John xiv. 13). If thou observe these conditions with earnest care, thou shalt have what thou askest.

THURSDAY

CHRIST CONSOLETH HIS APOSTLES.

1. *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.* John xiv. 18.

(1) He consoleth His Apostles in their grief for His departure by promising His ever-present help in trouble. If God be with thee, who shall be against thee? He will never leave thee, unless thou first leave Him. He will continue to be thy Father, if thou cease not to be His son. Yea, though He leave thee a little while in desolation or affliction: yet again a little while and thou shalt see Him, and thy heart shall rejoice. (2) He hearteneth them with the hope of an eternal reward: *In my Father's house are many mansions: and, I go to prepare a place for you.* Whatever our affliction it is but a little thing, but unto it there is promised one day an eternal weight of glory. Look thereunto, lest thou be cast down and faint by the way.

2. *Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* John xv. 19.

Lo, another consolation : if thou have somewhat to suffer, it is a sign of God's choice of thee. The reprobate He suffereth to turn aside by the flocks of his companions and his earthly delights. He addeth yet a fourth, *The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me* (John xvi. 27). Our afflictions are the pledge of God's love towards us. What greater consolation dost thou seek than this; to know that God loveth thee?

3. *If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.* John xv. 20.

Fifthly, He consoleth them by His own example : *They hated me before they hated you. But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world* (John xvi. 33). And ye also shall overcome, because I fight on your side. And for yet a sixth consolation, *Your sorrow shall be turned into joy*; but the joy of the world into eternal lamentation. And how much better it is for thee to enter on that way the end of which is joy everlasting! On then to the thorny crown, and to the Cross!

FRIDAY

CHRIST'S PRAYER UNTO THE FATHER FOR HIS DISCIPLES.

1. *Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.* John xvii. 11.

(1) Even through a right perfect union of charity, that they may be one, as are the Persons of the Trinity; not one in nature indeed, but one in mind, in judgment, in will; united in taste and in desire. See that thy charity be of this sort. (2) *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world*, that is, that thou shouldest save them from all afflictions; for it is My will that they should yet suffer for My

Name's sake ; *but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil*, that is, from sin. Be anxious therefore to avoid sin, rather than the Cross and tribulation. (3) *Sanctify them through thy truth*, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, that they may be able ministers of the Gospel. That thou mayest be such, work thou with His grace, and be holy in truth without dissembling.

2. *Thine they were, and thou gavest them me ; and they have kept thy word.* John xvii. 6.

Behold the first motive of His prayer for them. On the part of Christ, because they were committed unto Him by the Father : on the part of the disciples, because they have kept the Word of God, the faith, the law ; and His grace in them was not in vain ; thus were they worthy that He should pray for them. Wilt thou find Jesus thine advocate with God ? See that thou sayest truly *I am thine* (Psalm 119), and that the grace of God in thee be not in vain. Behold the second motive : *I am glorified in them* (John xvii. 10) for that they glorify Me before men. Dost thou also glorify God by thine affections, thy words, thy deeds ?

3. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.* John xvii. 20.

Believe that for thee also He prayed, that thou wert present then before His eyes both in the perfect vision which flowed from His Divine Being and by the infused knowledge granted to Him as Traveller through this world. That prayer will have its due effect, unless thou thyself standest in the way thereof. What then was the prayer which He prayed for thee and for all ? (1) *That they all may be one.* (2) *As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us*, through love for God. So then He asked for thee this twofold love. Happy man if it be

thine indeed ! But it will never be thine if thou drive not from thee all mere sensual love.

SATURDAY

HE LEAVETH THE UPPER ROOM FOR THE GARDEN, AND FORETELLETH THAT THE DISCIPLES WILL BE OFFENDED.

1. *And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives.* Luke xxii. 39.

Jesus departeth from the city which once He had loved, which He had honoured with so many benefits, over which He had wept, the city which had received graces and put them to no use. Who then would not fear lest Jesus depart from him even when He poureth benefits upon him ? It is not the outpouring of blessings which giveth thee security, but thy co-operation to the utmost of thy power, aided by the mercy of God. *He went, as he was wont.* Thus He ever withdrew Himself from all disturbance as He made ready to pray ; nor would he break His custom herein, though He knew that in that very place He would be taken captive. Learn thou to refuse anything that may hinder thy spiritual exercises, much less to seek it out, or make pretence of it.

2. *Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night.* Matthew xxvi. 31.

Offended : yea, through fear and cowardice ye will forsake Me, your Shepherd, when ye shall see those things come to pass of which so often I have forewarned you. Truly, it is one thing to think of bonds and death, but another to see them before our eyes. There is hardly one who is in dread of evils yet to come : but when they are close at hand the spirit even of the brave is broken. Though in a thousand meditations thou hast resolved to scale the Hill of Difficulty, stand yet in fear : trust not in thyself, but in grace alone.

3. *Peter answered and said unto him. Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.* Matthew xxvi. 33.

These things spake Peter with the fervour that was habitual to him, but without humility added thereunto. He that hath overmuch confidence in himself, boasteth much, effecteth little, falleth into grievous peril. Even so Peter (1) contradicteth Christ, who is the primal Truth, and that not once but yet again; (2) obstinately opposeth himself to Christ when He yet more urgently predicteth his fall; (3) perverteth others by his example, so that they all said likewise. *He should have said, Give me grace, so that though all men should be offended, yet I may not deny thee* (Origen). Trust thou not overmuch in thy good affections, which are changed by the lightest breeze, but stablish them in the grace of God.

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

THE SORROW, WEARINESS AND FEAR OF CHRIST IN
THE GARDEN.

1. *He . . . began to be sorrowful and very heavy.* Matthew xxvi. 37.

Neither could He have feared nor been made sorrowful unless He had allowed such affections to possess His Soul. Here was the very excess of charity which willingly suffered affliction in that part of Him which His enemies could not torment. Consider, if man may so do, the causes of this sorrow. (1) The lively representation of all and sundry those His tortures, and of His most shameful death. All the succession of His sufferings He now endured in one perception of His Soul. So will I also bind together all the flowers of His Passion in one posy, even a bundle of myrrh, ever to rest within my heart. (2)

A like lively representation of all sin, and of the scanty harvest of His Passion. Thou therefore wast in part the cause of this His sorrow. Christ was made sorrowful for thee, because thou didst exult in wickedness. Each moment of such pleasure for thee was a pang of torment for thy God. Never again! lest thou cause Him to complain, *What profit is there in my blood?* (Psalm xxx. 9).

2. *Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.* Matthew xxvi. 38.

Thus did the vehemence of grief find vent in speech. Was it to seek for consolation that He spake? or to make known to the Apostles the privy secrets of His Heart? *My soul*: the Soul of Christ, ever in actual fruition of the Beatific Vision before which by the law of its nature all grief must flee away, even that Soul is now made sorrowful. Be thou amazed. That He may suffer, Christ seeketh the aid of miracle to overcome nature. O love! O thirst for suffering! But who are they to whom He thus openeth His grief? the very same whom He made His companions at the Transfiguration. Learn from this that when God granteth spiritual consolations to any He prepareth them to suffer special pain. Learn to be with Christ not only on Mount Tabor, but also in His agony on Mount Olivet.

3. *Tarry ye here, and watch with me.* Matthew xxvi. 38.

Thou mayest here consider the remedies which Christ applied to His sorrow. (1) First He opened His affliction to His disciples. Grief ever seemeth to be asswaged if it be shewn to thy friend. This thou shalt find true, if thou open thy temptations to a wise guide. Wounds displayed are as easy to salve as hidden ones are difficult. (2) He betaketh Himself to prayer. *Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.* No solicitation hath power to lead the King's daughter

into sin, when she crieth with confidence to her father. The thief, betrayed by one that crieth out, straightway taketh flight. When thou art tempted, therefore, turn not aside unto creatures, but unto God.

MONDAY

CHRIST'S PRAYER IN THE GARDEN.

1. *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.* Matthew xxvi. 39.

This is the first part of the prayer. He prayeth now as Man, avowing His horror at the prospect of so bitter a death. Peradventure also He so prayeth from desire to hasten the consummation of His Passion. Peradventure He asketh not that He Himself should pass by that cup; but (as S. Hilary saith) *that which is passing unto him may afterward pass on to others: that they may drink as he hath drunk.* Think then that Christ biddeth thee drink after Him. Say in faith, *I will receive the cup of salvation* (Psalm cxvi. 12), and because, though the spirit be willing, yet the flesh is weak, add thereunto, *and call upon the name of the Lord.*

2. *Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.* Matthew xxvi. 39.

This is the second part of the prayer. If He asked, as Man, to be set free from death, He asked without result. Now He correcteth His natural will by His rational will, subjecting Himself to the Divine will. If He asked from desire of suffering the sooner, in this also He resigneth Himself. Or if He asked that others also might drink His cup, He now leaveth to the Father's will both who shall drink and in what measure. Learn to correct by reason the inclinations of the natural appetite; learn to commend thyself to the Divine will in all things.

3. *He . . . went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.* Matthew xxvi. 44.

Twice He brake off His prayer, for His disciples' sake, who slept in the time of their own peril; that He might exhort them to prayer as a remedy against their coming time of cowardice. He giveth Himself alternately, now to prayer, now to a work of charity. So must thou also do. When thou hast mingled with men, return to God. And there be times when thou must break off thy prayer to help thy neighbour. Works of charity are better than works of piety. *He prayeth the third time, saying the same words.* That is no empty or barren prayer in which thou oft repeatest the same affections.

TUESDAY

CHRIST'S AGONY AND BLOODY SWEAT.

1. *And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly.* Luke xxii. 44.

There was a struggle between His lower and His higher Manhood; the one compassed with fear, the other exercising an unhampered will and imposing its own sentence of death upon itself. Learn then by the help of reason and the higher self ever to struggle against the lower; to refuse the dictates of the senses, and accept those of the reason: and all this in no languid fashion, but if need be even with agony. Next learn that the more thou art tempted the more thou must give thyself to prayer, that thou mayest have God to help thee to victory.

2. *And his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* Luke xxii. 44.

To what depth of misery hath God descended for my sake! The malady is mine: the Physician

sweateth for my cure. For my sins the earth cried for vengeance on my soul, and I had nothing else to look for. Jesus sprinkled it with His merciful Blood, that it might cry for mercy. Mercy, my God! My soul was the choice vineyard He had planted for Himself: and because it proved barren and useless He now watereth it with His own Blood. My God, how greatly hast thou loved me! how little return I give Thee! Thou pourest out Thy Blood, shall I deny my sweat and toil?

3. *There appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.* Luke xxii. 43.

Such is the fruit of long continued prayer. When thou art in tribulation, persevere in prayer; God will send thee, as an angel, interior consolation. See the Creator willingly accepting comfort from a creature! Learn thou to console the troubled mind with kindness and gentleness, to restore it to hope by thy good counsel, and when thyself art sick and sorry, refuse not in thy pride the good offices of humble folk.

WEDNESDAY

CHRIST LEAVETH PRAYER TO VISIT HIS DISCIPLES.

1. *And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?* Matthew xxvi. 40.

The Master visiteth the Apostles, to see if they watch and pray, as He had commanded. The lower are subject to visitation by the higher. Take it not amiss. *He . . . findeth them asleep.* The lofty promises of Peter have vanished into slumber. And thine too how often! How often dost thou disdain to spend one hour with thy Lord in prayer! How dost thou watch not even one hour to keep thy

resolutions! If thou art blamed, keep silence with Peter. He who otherwise was ever ready with an answer, is now silent and ashamed.

2. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.* Matthew xxvi. 41.

There was danger that the Apostles through fear of the Jews might deny Christ or forsake Him. Therefore He biddeth them watch and pray. Behold the surest defence against temptation: watching, that is attention, and prayer. Watch: do thy business with attention, reflection, consideration. Pray: *He goeth into temptation who goeth not to prayer* (S. Chrysostom).

3. *Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.* Matthew xxvi. 45.

In irony are they bidden to *sleep on now*; as though He should say "I warned you to prevent the time of danger: now the hour is at hand when I must be betrayed and ye should stand on My side. What will ye do, being not forearmed? Ye would not watch and pray with Me: now therefore I will leave you to yourselves." O Lord, let this never befall me that Thou shouldest leave me to myself! That would be ruin inevitable. I will therefore watch with Thee, and pray, that I may be able to meet all perils in Thy company.

THURSDAY

HE GOETH TO MEET THE MULTITUDE AND THE GUARDS.

1. *Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.* Matthew xxvi. 46.

They are the words of one that panteth eagerly for

bonds and suffering. How cometh it that He who so lately had feared and been sore amazed and very heavy at the mere thought of these things is now so bold in the very presence of the officers? See herein the power of prayer and of perfect resignation to the will of God. If thou use these means, thou wilt go unterrified to meet what thou didst fear. Thou failest in time of tribulation, because thou disposest not thyself thereto by meditation and receivest it not as from the hand of God. Therefore, when the hour is at hand, thou fleest.

2. *And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came. . . . Matthew xxvi. 47.*

Behold the last result of Judas' unchecked passion! From avarice to theft, from theft to hatred of Christ, from hating to selling Him, from selling to betraying Him, shewing the way to the band of murderers. Unhappy the man over whom even one passion once getteth the dominion! It needeth not many to bring thee to destruction. A single one is all too powerful. And one summoneth a multitude. Lay the axe to the root. Though thou be of the clergy, thou hast somewhat to fear. Judas was *one of the twelve*.

3. *Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. Matthew xxvi. 48.*

See the assiduity of hate. He foreseeeth that He will not easily be known; he remembereth how aforetime He had escaped when men would have stoned Him, or made Him a king; now he warneth them to lead Him away safely, lest He elude them at the last. Would that thou shewedest equal caution and reflection about doing good! Ah, lead Him with thee safely, lest thou lose Him from thy heart!

FRIDAY

OF THE KISS OF JUDAS.

1. *And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him.* Matthew xxvi. 49.

He came forthwith, dissembling, shameless, with smiling face and poisoned heart. *While he plotted death, he offered salutation* (saith Victor of Antioch). He calleth Him Master even while perfidiously He deserteth from discipleship. He kisseth; *daring to make that dearest token of affection an instrument of the devil* (S. Ambrose). Hadst thou been there to see, would there have been one word, one gesture, wherewith thou couldest find fault? Yet how vast a depth of wickedness was there! It sufficeth not that thou shew the outer signs of a good Christian or a clergyman. See that there be no poison lurking within. No man will find a fault in thee, but God, to whom all things are open, will be thy judge.

2. *And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come?* Matthew xxvi. 50.

He calleth him Friend to win his friendship back. He asketh wherefore he hath come that he may remember himself and think of the enormity of the crime he purposeth. O infinite mercy of God, are any pains too great for Thee for rescue of the sinner? He revileth him not for crime and villainy and sacrilege. He thought not on what was due to Judas, but on what beseemed His own goodness. If He sheweth Himself thus gracious to His enemy, how will He treat a faithful friend? How dost *thou* behave thyself towards him that hath given thee offence?

3. *Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?* Luke xxii. 48.

Is there a savage beast that would not be tamed by

tones so loving? *Behold his ineffable mercy!* (saith Euthymius) *since indeed he cared for the traitor until that moment when he was delivered into their hands.* Still He endeavoureth to shew him his unmeasurable crime, that he may think what he doeth. What wouldest thou have done if God in visible form had said to thee as thou didst sin, "What doest thou? Betrayest thou the Son of Man?" Doubtless thou wouldest have recoiled. But though thou mightest not see Him with thine eyes, thou shouldest have seen Him with thy mind when the thought arose "Wilt thou do this? It is sin: God is offended thereby." How oft have such words passed through thy heart! How stubborn didst thou shew thyself!

SATURDAY

CHRIST MAKETH HIMSELF KNOWN TO THE MULTITUDE
AND THE GUARDS.

1. *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth.* John xviii. 4.

The multitudes were there in all their fury: Judas had printed his kiss; yet they fall not upon Him as they had designed, but stand motionless. *And Judas also . . . stood with them.* They could not move, for Jesus yet gave them not licence; therefore He went forth unto them. Thus He sheweth that He hath power to refuse all that shall come to pass, but none the less consenteth of His own free will to suffer it; nay rather valorously steppeth out to meet it. Here is the example for thine imitation. The sons of God know not a forced endurance. He that goeth not to meet his trials will flee when they advance upon him.

2. *And said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. . . . As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground.* John xviii. 4—6.

He asketh, and asketh again: not that He may know (for He knoweth all things), but that they may answer, *Jesus of Nazareth*, and by mention of the dignity of His Person may acknowledge their horrible crime. O goodness of God, who useth every art to seek our souls! Acknowledge thou that dignity of His Person, not only lest thou offend Him, but that thou mayest seek Him the more earnestly. Who seeketh not God loseth himself. There is no threat, no voice of thunder: at that one word *I am he*, they fall backward. Such is the fate of them that seek God to do away with Him. How wilt thou stand when in the Judgment that voice shall thunder forth *I am he*: He whom thou hast treated with disdain. Take heed then that thou seek Him in love and in obedience.

3. *If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.* John xviii. 8.

(1) He sheweth His anxious care for His own, that He may lose none of them. If such was His care for so few, be sure that it will be no less for the many thousands of the faithful. As saith S. Cyril of Alexandria, *What he did for the few he will not neglect for the many, and how shall he who at such a time took care for those few fail to protect the countless multitude of the faithful?* Thou also therefore art under His protection. Put thy trust in Him. He will not have thy soul lost, unless thou lose it thyself.

(2) While their hearts fail and waver, He taketh counsel for them, unmindful of Himself. In what wise dost thou cover up thy neighbour's failings?

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

PETER DEFENDETH CHRIST.

1. *Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant.* John xviii. 10.

When Christ gave them licence the guards laid hands on Him. Peter with indiscreet zeal for His defence, unbidden, by his own authority, smiteth with the sword. One against all, he did but expose himself and his companions and Christ Himself to graver peril. Discretion is as needful as zeal is praiseworthy. The exceeding vehemence even of thy good affections needeth to be moderated. Zeal must be combined with charity, lest it relapse into anger or revenge. If thou professest zeal for the honour of God, turn it upon thyself. There shalt thou find many enemies to smite. Cut off all that is not for the honour of God.

2. *Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, wilt thou that I shall not drink it?* John xviii. 11.

Thus He rebuketh Peter, and instructeth him that though the cup of His Passion be brought Him by the ministry of men, yet He receiveth it from His Father who first offered it to Him, and by whose providence all things are governed. Say not thou, "This one, or that, afflicteth me, casteth me down, woundeth my honour." This cup is offered thee by Him who gave His Son one deeper far. Thou robbest God of His glory if thou assignest to a creature what is His. He it is, and none else, who *bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up*. Be this thy consolation, that He that giveth thee the cup is thy Father, who loveth thee right dearly, and meaneth it not for thy hurt but for thy profit. Peradventure the Physician will cure thy sickness with this bitter draught.

3. *And he touched his (Malchus') ear and healed him.* Luke xxii. 51.

The Lord, as though bound to restitution, repairereth the injury which His servant did. He healeth the wounds of one that came to wound Him. He

rendereth good for evil. How often hast found it thus! *Teaching us that we should do good to our persecutors* (saith S. Chrysostom). He healeth his ear, for since faith cometh by hearing, this is the organ whereby God's presence is discerned. O that He would heal the hearing of thy soul, that thou mightest apply it to His holy inspirations!

MONDAY

THE TAKING OF CHRIST AND THE FLIGHT OF HIS DISCIPLES.

1. *Jesus said to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.* S. Matthew xxvi. 55.

Even as they stretch out their hands to bind Him and carry Him away with all indignity, He saith no word that consorteth not with His loving-kindness. (1) He sheweth them how grievous it is to Him that they treat Him as a thief, who sought no booty but of souls snatched from the devil's grasp. Ah, be my soul thy booty! Lo, take it! it is thine. (2) He revealeth their ingratitude. This is the return they make for His sublime teaching in the Temple, at which they had so often marvelled. What return makest thou to God, who speaketh to thee by holy inspirations? (3) He sheweth them that He is taken when He will, by His own free choice, not by any power of theirs. Therefore is He taken now, because *this is your hour*, even the hour decreed by the Father, in which I give Myself into your hands. Thus He setteth me free from mine iniquities, whereby I have delivered myself into the hands of the devil.

2. *Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.* Matthew xxvi. 50.

The cruel wolves rush upon the Lamb. Mark their savage lust, but see the cause thereof. *The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord was taken in their pits (in our sins, Vulgate; Lamentations iv. 20).* It was thou who by thy sins didst weave those ropes and forge those chains. It is of thee that He maketh His complaint: *The cords of the wicked have wrapped me round (Psalm cxix. 61, R.V.).* But be afraid. The time will come when the mighty Samson will break His bonds, and the *Lord God to whom vengeance belongeth, the God to whom vengeance belongeth will shew himself (accomplish his work in freedom, Vulgate), (Psalm xciv. 1).* Therefore set thou cords upon thy hands, lest thou stretch them forth unto iniquity.

3. *Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.* Matthew xxvi. 56.

Silent are the voices which said *Let us also go, that we may die with him (John xi. 16), and Though I should die with thee,* and the like (Matthew xxvi. 35). All, yea even the zealous Peter and the beloved John, *forsook him,* their Lord and Master, *and fled,* to save their own skins from danger. Judge then whom they loved the more, themselves or Christ. Self-love is foremost to spur thee to the deserting of Christ. Learn to put no trust in thy fervour or thy resolutions. Before the battle thou didst promise thee many a victory over thyself, but on the field too often thou failest. Thou must prove by deeds the value of thy good resolves.

TUESDAY

JESUS IS LED AWAY TO ANNAS FIRST.

1. *And led him away to Annas.* John xviii. 13.
All that was done on the way thou shalt follow

more piously with thine affections than thy mind. How different was that last entry into Jerusalem from that on which we gaze to-day! How fickle are the minds of men, changing from glad welcome to mad rage, from praises to insults, from obedience to reproach! And wilt thou put thy trust in men? Thou mayest believe that on the way the Lord of Majesty endured all that thou canst imagine of discomfort to His body and insult to His dignity. Suffer thou with Him: thou wert the cause; acknowledge this and mourn. While thou dost contemplate Jesus silent under all, learn by a holy silence to make light of those far lesser injuries which thou endurest, or perchance dost only fear.

2. *The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.* John xviii. 19.

A guilty criminal examineth his Judge. The Judge standeth shamefast before the criminal. See the arrogance, the scoffs and jeers of that examination. God is judged by men, the Just by sinners. Let it then be *with me a very small thing that I should be judged . . . of man's judgment* (1 Cor. iv. 3). He that in innocence endured the judgment of sinners meriteth that I should bear to be judged by my betters. Charity which *suffereth long and beareth all things* will procure that I be not cast down.

3. *Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; . . . and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me.* John xviii. 20, 21.

Two questions are asked: of His disciples, and of His doctrine. To the former He hath no answer, for His disciples had fled and were no honour to Him: unable now to speak good concerning them, He would speak no evil. Have a care then how thou speakest of thy neighbour. Refrain from saying that which will be no commendation of him. And see

that thou be not a shame unto thy great Master. But for to prove the blamelessness of His doctrine, He appealeth freely and without fear to the common knowledge: *I spake openly*. He that hath the testimony of a good conscience dareth so to plead. So mayest thou ever dare, if thy works be wrought as in the open light of day.

WEDNESDAY

OF THE BLOW WHICH CHRIST ENDURED.

1. *One of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?* John xviii. 22.

Consider how grave was this injury. Vile man striketh the blow, the Son of God receiveth it: a cruel blow, struck, it is thought, with mailed hand, by Malchus, the ingrate, whose ear He had so lately healed (so averreth S. Chrysostom); struck on that face which the angels desire to look into; struck in full session of the rulers and the priests; struck to rebuke an answer that was gentle, true, reverent. He that inflicteth it receiveth praise, He that endured it, mockery. Imagine a king of this world so treated by his slave: see the instruments of torture made ready, the stake, the wheel. O my Jesus, Thy goodness, Thy long-suffering! And shall my proud resentment rise, when I hear one harsh word, or bear some trifling shame, far less than my desert?

2. *Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?* John xviii. 23.

(1) The Lord kept silence under the scourge, the thorns, the nails; but at this blow He speaketh. Thus He taught us that while silence is an ornament of patience, yet patience loseth nothing of her grace by

answering again, if the answer be like that of Christ, gentle and patient. If thou sufferest wrong, make a gentle answer, or else hold thy peace. (2) The Lord speaketh good, and is smitten therefor: so doth He expiate my sins in word. If I speak evil, well may He ask, *Why smitest thou me?*

3. *Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.* John xviii. 24.

Follow in thine imagination (as under Point 1 yesterday) all the injuries that Christ endured on the way to Caiaphas. Behold His shame, and the affections of His heart whereby He offereth all to the Father for thy salvation. Suffer thou with Him: rouse thee to indignation against thine own self, who art the cause of all; offer thy grief, thy gratitude.

THURSDAY

OF THE FALSE WITNESS AGAINST JESUS.

1. *Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death.* Matthew xxvi. 59.

Their first intention was to slay Jesus: but also they meant not to be branded among the people with the shame of an unjust condemnation. They therefore, whose office it was to protect from falsehood, themselves seek false witness, *cloking their devices under the form of an arraignment* (as saith Victor of Antioch). Much may be cloked under a pretence of virtue. Dost thou not sometimes so thyself? Art thou not satisfied with appearance, and carest not for reality? One day the vail will be taken away from thy deeds, and they will be shewn for what they are.

2. *But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came.* Matthew xxvi. 60.

Behold the innocence of my Jesus' life! These men of malice not only find no crime in Him, but not the shadow of a crime. Well doth Origen say, *Against Jesus no suspicious appearance could be found to assist their falsehoods. So pure and irreprehensible was his life.* Would that thy life were such that the false accuser of the brethren might find nought in thee to bear the fashion of a sin! But were this the hour of thy departure hence, thinkest thou that there would be nought to find?

3. *And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?* Matthew xxvi. 62.

The unjust judge himself marvelled at Jesus' silence: do thou the like. Ask the reason thereof. O my Jesus, why art Thou silent? (1) The testimonies destroy themselves, and need no answer. *But neither so did their witness agree together.* They were refuted by His character and His life. See how strong a defence is integrity of life. But in vain dost thou excuse thyself in word when thine actions speak against thee. (2) Christ by His silence maketh satisfaction for the folly of Adam's speech, when he made excuse for his sin (Genesis iii.). Thus saith S. Hierome. And by thee also is silence imposed on Him, if thou makest excuse for thine offences, and wouldest have thy guilt seem innocence.

FRIDAY

CHRIST IS ADJURED BY CAIAPHAS, AND CONDEMNED FOR
BLASPHEMY.

1. *And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said . . . I am.* Matthew xxvi. 63, 64; Mark xiv. 62.

The priest professeth love of the truth; but in reality he deviseth a subterfuge. If Christ say nothing, He will incur the charge of contempt of God; if He deny, of deceiving the people and leading them astray; if He confess, of blasphemy. For Christ a way of escape would not have been difficult. Yet, having given no answer to other questions, He now confesseth that He is indeed the Son of God; yea, though He knoweth that He will therefore be condemned to death. See with what freedom we should confess God, and guard His honour when it is in peril. Away with all fear of ridicule or inconvenience, when virtue or God's honour are at stake! If virtue be lost, what profit is there in our life?

2. *Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* Matthew xxvi. 64.

He maketh mention of the present and the future coming; the one in the humbleness of flesh, calling Himself *the Son of man*; the other in the majesty of judgment, reminding those proud priests that they must be judged by Him who now abideth their unholy sentence. Then He will sit in power, and they will stand in fear and trembling. Thou who unjustly passest judgment on thy brother, remember that thou hast to be judged, even as he. To banish all fear of that Judge who cometh in the clouds, love now thy brother; for he is His proxy here on earth. To lose thy dread of Him that sitteth at the right hand of God, proffer to thy brother thine own right hand of friendship.

3. *Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy. . . . What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.* Matthew xxvi. 65, 66.

See again their wickedness veiled with a cloke of

piety. When he heard what he called blasphemy, the High Priest rent his garments in token of mourning, after the manner of the Jews. Better had they rent their hearts. The one feigneth to find blasphemy in those sacred words, the rest with one voice declaim their sentence : *He is guilty of death.* God suffered judgment to be given upon Himself, that thou mightest escape the judgment of that day. In what spirit did Christ receive this judgment? Foster the same if thy words or deeds be reviled.

SATURDAY

OF THE INJURIES ENDURED THAT NIGHT BY CHRIST.

1. *Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him.* Matthew xxvi. 67.

To spit in the face is the foulest of all insults. O Lord, *Look upon the face of thine Anointed* (Psalm lxxxiv. 9). Acknowledge the express image of Thy Person. This is Thy Son, whom thou hast crowned with glory and honour. This is what I have done to Him. I have spat in the face of Christ, as oft as I have defiled my soul with sin ; for it was created in the image of God. Suffer me, Lord, to wipe off the spittle : yea, let me wipe from my soul the smallest stains thereof. So also I must learn to imitate Thee, if any spit slander in my face. Enough for me that it is Thine example that I follow.

2. *And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy* (unto us), *who is it that smote thee?* Luke xxii. 64.

They would make of the eternal wisdom an image of unknowing. How wouldest thou bear to be treated thus? Yet who art thou, and who is God? They think themselves unseen of God, the Searcher

of all hearts. Thou mayest bandage the eyes of men, but not of God. Wherefore dost thou complain if one but touch thee? Nay, thou thyself darest to strike God : and He keepeth silence. He waiteth for thee to come back to thyself. If thou dost not, the day will come when He shall accuse thee that there, and then, thou didst smite Him with such a sin. Thou mockest now : what wilt thou say then? God looketh on and judgeth.

3. *And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.* Luke xxii. 65.

Ponder, as thy imagination serveth, all the injuries that would fall on Christ from that wanton crew, desirous of pleasing their rulers, inflamed with wine, instigated by the devil, unrestrained by the presence of the better sort. Dost Thou do nought for Thy defence, my Jesus? dost thou thus deliver Thyself into the hands of sinners? And I? Even into Thy hands I cannot resign myself. Yet, as I will to be saved, this I must do. From this time forth I will put myself in Thy hands : and if thou smite me, by someone's word or deed, yet will I not go back from Thee.

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

OF PETER'S FIRST DENIAL.

1. *But Peter followed him afar off.* Matthew xxvi. 58.

He *followed*, for love ; but *afar off*, for fear. Fear had chilled his ardour, and made him slow to follow. Here was the first beginning of evil. The more thou relaxest from thy fervour in the serving of God, the nearer art thou come to falling. The slower thy steps, the more doth he thou followest gain on thee. Each day therefore we must walk in newness of spirit.

2. *And Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.* John xviii. 18. *Now Peter sat without.* Matthew xxvi. 69.

See the results of his slowness in following. (1) He *standeth*, coming at last to a standstill, and ceasing altogether to follow that good path whereon he entered. (2) He *sitteth*, as though content to do no more. (3) He *warmeth himself*, for the soul that hath departed from God is starved and frozen cold. Are not these things a call to fervour? But if thou wouldest keep this gift thou must not mingle with the multitude, or with companions for whom God hath no savour. Let Peter teach thee the greatness of the danger. *But he that loveth danger shall perish therein* (Ecclesiasticus iii. 26).

3. *And a damsel came unto him, saying, And thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.* Matthew xxvi. 69, 70.

(1) Is Jesus so execrable that His Apostle deemeth Him unworthy to be confessed? In company of other Apostles he stood forth and confessed Him the Son of the living God: surrounded by the wicked he dissembleth all knowledge of Him. See the result of keeping company with the lax. (2) Peter fell at a damsel's words. In this damsel behold the delights of the senses. Shameful is the fall of him that hearkeneth to them. Ask thyself if this be not the truth.

MONDAY

OF PETER'S SECOND AND THIRD DENIALS.

1. *Another maid saw him, and said . . . This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.* Matthew xxvi. 71, 72.

To the second denial he added an oath. So one sin formeth the pathway to another and a graver one. Be thou ware of lesser sins lest thou fall yet deeper. *He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little* (Ecclesiasticus xix. 1). This is a true saying. O Peter, knowest thou not the Man who sustained thee amid the waves? whom thou didst confess to be the Son of God? whose many miracles thou didst behold? Alas, how soon we change! When the spirit is fervent, we aspire to die for Christ: when it groweth cold, a feeble maid, a light temptation, sufficeth for our overthrow. Let no man trust in himself, but each one with fear and trembling work out his own salvation.

2. *They that stood by said . . . to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: . . . but he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man.* Mark xiv. 70, 71.

See the stark ruin of the pillar of the Church! This is the penalty of them that trust in themselves: left to themselves they learn their feebleness. Stand thou then in fear, or else thy *house shall soon be overthrown* (Ecclesiasticus xxvii. 3). To avoid a little humiliation, Peter denied Christ. How often from a like fear or through respect of men hast thou so done, not, may be, in words, but in thine act when thou hast been ashamed of virtuous deeds! Fear then that word of Christ: *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me . . . of him shall the Son of man be ashamed* (Luke ix. 26). Shame of the good is evil, even as shame of the evil is good.

3. *And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus. . . . And he went out, and wept bitterly.* Matthew xxvi. 74, 75.

O boundless mercy of God! While Peter yet speaketh, yea, while he uttereth the words of denial, He looketh upon him. Forgetful of His own sorrows,

He bendeth all His care towards the salvation of His servant even while that servant doeth Him so deep an injury. How often, Lord, when Thou mightest have been wroth with me hast thou remembered Thy mercy! How often, even as I fell, hast Thou held out to me the means to rise again! Should I not love Thee, O good Jesu? But my love sufficeth not if I grieve and weep not over the injury I have done Thee. With Peter then let me begin to weep, and never cease.

TUESDAY

CHRIST IS LED TO PILATE.

1. *When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. Matthew xxvii. 1.*

Now take they yet more evil counsel than aforetime. At the first time they agreed not all together. At the second there remained yet some doubtfulness. Now all conspire alike for the sentence of death. Thus be there degrees even in wickedness. Be thou ware of its first assault and thou shalt not be in danger of the second. He that taketh counsel with the wicked consenteth to their iniquity. In *the morning* they took counsel. The sons of darkness put to shame the sons of light, who are less watchful to save Jesus alive than are His foes to destroy Him. But do thou in the morning take counsel with all the powers of thy soul how thou mayest serve Him: how thou mayest destroy those passions which would destroy Him.

2. *And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. Luke xxiii. 1.*

That multitude had spent the full night in mocking of Christ: they had taken little or no rest in sleep; hatred of Christ and the will to shew pleasure to the

rulers gave them power to endure the hardness of such a watch. Hast thou the like readiness to serve and please Christ? *The whole multitude arose.* When others are watching early at the doors of the eternal wisdom, why dost thou yet give thyself to superfluous slumber? In the morning Christ goeth forth to His work which the Father hath given Him to do : go thou also forth to thine.

3. *And they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled.* John xviii. 28.

Behold the scruples of the men of blood ! *Blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel!* (Matthew xxiii. 24). Their care is all for the exterior holiness of the law ; as though it were a sin to transgress the law by entering a Gentile's judgment hall, but no sin to put Christ to death. *Be ye so careful, saith Rupert, not to be defiled by entering the judgment hall, and fear ye not the foul interior pollution of the murderer?* Even so is it with the Christian who careth only for the outward appearance of goodness, and neglecteth the reality thereof. *What will he do when the Lord shall visit him?* (Ecclesiasticus ii. 14).

WEDNESDAY

THE DESPAIR OF JUDAS.

1. *Then Judas . . . when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver . . . saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.* Matthew xxvii.

3, 4.

Peradventure, when he betrayed Christ, he supposed that He would not be condemned, but would save Himself by a miracle. It fell out otherwise. Now at last he discerneth the extremity of his wickedness. Here hast thou the type of him that

esteemeth a sin light before that he committeth it, but when it is done seeth his own miserable case. Even so the devil blindeth thee that thou mayest sin, and openeth thine eyes that thou mayest despair. Judas would not have sinned, had he listened to the Master's word, *Friend, wherefore art thou come?* (Matthew xxvi. 50). Nor wouldest thou sin, if thou wouldest listen to the voice of conscience or the inspirations of God.

2. *And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that.* Matthew xxvii. 4.

According to S. Paschasius these were *words of mockery and insult*. This is the reward of them that offend God to win men's favour: they are mocked and despised by those for whose sake they sinned. Though thou must lose the favour of men, set more store on the favour of God. If thou wilt please men, thou shalt not be the servant of God. And thou, O priest, spurn not thus the anxious penitent, lest he likewise despair.

3. *And Judas cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.* Matthew xxvii. 5.

To what a depth hath Christ's Apostle fallen! Who would have thought that such an ending was in store for the avarice that desired that paltry price? Even so every passion gathereth strength, if it be not stifled at the first. Watch thou, and fear thine own self. [Every evil hath its small beginning.]

THURSDAY

CHRIST IS BROUGHT INTO PILATE'S PRESENCE.

1. *Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered . . . him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.* John xviii. 29, 30.

(1) By such a question he beginneth well his consideration of the matter. But he contendeth with a mob, and will not easily be quit of them. The cause of Christ must not be debated with the unruly mob of our own affections. They will never lack cause of complaint against uprightness. (2) *He hath done all things well* (Mark vii. 37), and He is called a *malefactor*. Ah, their ingratitude! Hast *thou* done well and art reviled? Look upon the patience and the humility of thy Jesus. Answer not again, nor ask that any say of thee, *He hath done all things well* until thou hear God say *Well done*. (3) *Malefactor*: the word embraceth every sort of wickedness: is this their title for the Son of God? Truly a calumny unheard of! Do thou adore His sinlessness: and rejoice if fault be found with thy good deeds; thus shalt thou imitate Christ more nearly.

2. *Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law.* John xviii. 31.

What manner of iniquity is this, to leave the accused to the pleasure of his enemy that hath accused him? Behold how Christ is despised, as though He were such a man that none would deign to be His judge. Suffer thou with Jesus in the scorn that He endureth. *The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.* Yet that selfsame thing ye do, in the hatred of your hearts and your words wherewith ye demand His death. Where is the holiness ye boast of? God is not mocked. He seeth the hidden secrets of the heart though there be no outward action. So, when one of my passions suggesteth an act which transgresseth against God let me say, It is not lawful for me to put Jesus to death. Nay rather, I will give Him love and reverence.

3. *And they began to accuse him saying,*

(1) *We found this fellow perverting the nation*

(Luke xxiii. 2): Him that came to lift the poor out of the mire, that cleansed the lepers, healed the sick, enjoined obedience to those in authority. Was that to pervert, or pacify? (2) *Forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar*: Him that had openly bidden men *render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's*. (3) *Saying that he himself is Christ a King*: Him that had fled lest men should make Him a king. How false are the accusations brought against Him! Christ heareth them all: He breaketh not in upon their words, maketh no defence, answereth not again. Is such thy way with one that upbraideth thee with thy shortcomings, or proffereth a warning? Give thyself to Jesus that He may convert thee: offer Him the tribute of thy heart; adore and venerate thy King.

FRIDAY

CHRIST IS EXAMINED BY PILATE.

1. *And Jesus stood before the governor.* Matthew xxvii. 11.

Who? God, who framed the universe, the Judge of quick and dead. Before whom? A wicked judge. Wherefore? To be examined as a prisoner awaiting sentence. To such a depth did He descend who is the supreme Holiness, the purest Innocence. How long wilt thou refuse to abate thy pride? Jesus standeth. Behold His shame. Yet behold also His resolution, His lowly demeanour, His submissiveness, His reverence towards His unjust judge. Learn from Him how thou shouldest comport thyself when thou art put to shame, when thou standest before one that hath good reason to reprove thee.

2. *And the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.* Matthew xxvii. 11.

The governor asked in jest and mockery: Christ answered in soberness and truth. Yea, thou must

believe that He is King both of the universe and of thine own soul : thou must vow thyself to Him in all obedience. And hast thou dared to turn to enmity against Him? to give the allegiance of thy soul to another king? to say *I will not have this man to reign over me?* Hast thou dared to make kings of thine own depraved affections and do them service? And how harsh hath been their sway! Renounce them now. Say to them boldly, *I will not serve. Let me break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from me.*

3. *Pilate answered . . . Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?* John xviii. 35.

I will answer for Thee, my Jesus. He hath done all: He hath done nothing. All that is good and holy He hath done. Look round about and see. Nought that is evil or perverse cometh from Him nor findeth a place in Him. Yea I know well how to make answer for Thee. But and if Thou shouldest ask me this same question, *What hast thou done?* I stick fast and am covered with confusion. I see what ill use I have made of the talents Thou hast given, how by mine own neglect Thy grace hath been in vain in me. Henceforth before each action let me ask myself, What doest thou? that mine ears may never hear it sternly asked, *What hast thou done?*

SATURDAY

THE SAME EXAMINATION IS CONTINUED.

1. *Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.* John xviii. 36.

He saith not that He is not King of the world : but that He reigneth not like the kings of the world, with pomp and armament. What then is the manner of His royalty? Poverty, contempt, obedience, humility,

the Cross. Thus made He every knee to bow to Him. Now bow I mine. In the vileness of Thy plight I take Thee for my King; and such vileness for Thy sake I embrace. Vileness is no vileness if it be like Thine.

2. *Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King.* John xviii. 37.

Being questioned, He confesseth Himself a King the second time. Constancy and truth speak ever the same words. I believe and confess that Thou art King, and I will ever say, *Thou art my King and my God.* If passion invade the dominion of my soul, then will I say, *Thou art my King.* To this end was I born that I should bear witness unto this truth by my actions; and such witness will I ever bear.

3. *Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out.* John xviii. 38.

A wholesome question. Would that he had waited for an answer! Ask thou right often *What is truth?* but tarry thou the answer. The wizard self-love hath many suggestions: so also hath God, bidding thee deny and despise thyself. Ask, *What is truth?* Strip off the husk; fix thy mind on those truths which lead to action. Be thou ware also of such a *transient fervour* as *beginneth to desire what is good*, but quickly goeth out again and *abideth not in its purpose.* (Hugh of S. Victor.)

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

HE IS ACCUSED FOR THE LAST TIME, AND SENT UNTO
HEROD.

1. *He went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.* John xviii. 38.

Such testimony was the debt that Pilate owed to

Jesus' innocence. What cause of accusation should he find in Him, who sinned not, nor could sin? It is I that find full cause of death in Him: for I know that *the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all* (Isaiah liii. 6). My offences are worthy of death: I see them laid on Him. In me the fault; in Him the love; on Him the penalty. Now therefore I abhor mine own deeds: but His deed I embrace with love and thankfulness. Henceforward I will not add to that cause of death that I have laid on Him: nay, I will take away from it.

2. *And the chief priests accused him of many things. . . . But Jesus yet answered nothing, insomuch that the governor marvelled.* Mark xv. 3; Matthew xxvii. 14.

Of many things! Credence is given to authority, not to proof. Jesus keepeth silence, the silence of righteousness, not of necessity. Silence is the weightiest defence of innocence, when a man's life speaketh for him. Do thou so live that however many things may be said against thee, nothing can be proved. Keep silence, and let thy life be eloquent.

3. *As soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod.* Luke xxiii. 7.

Unable and unwilling to condemn, neither would he do his duty and acquit. Afraid to release the Lord from bonds, yet careless of His fate, he would fain release himself from cognizance of His case. Such is self-love, deserting the cause of God to promote its own. Whether of the twain holdest thou the cheaper, thyself, or God? If thou canst further the cause of one, whether of the twain wilt thou keep waiting? Such is the choice before thee wellnigh every day.

MONDAY

CHRIST IS MOCKED BY HEROD.

1. *And when Herod saw Jesus he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season . . . ; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.* Luke xxiii. 8.

Why, O Jesus, doest Thou no miracle for one who hath so great desire of Thee? (1) It is the desire of curiosity, not of holy affection (S. Gregory). *He sought no profit herein, but only to marvel at his miracles or his knowledge.* Take heed that thou seek affection rather than knowledge in thy meditation and thy study of holy books. (2) The Lord doeth no miracle because, as S. Ambrose saith, *He ever refrained from displaying of himself.* Thou who thinkest thou hast so much knowledge, learn one lesson yet—not to display thyself. The wish to be thought great is sure proof that thou art small.

2. *He questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.* Luke xxiii. 9.

(1) A miracle is desired: it is wrought and passeth unobserved. Amid calumny and accusation Jesus holdeth His peace: a mighty miracle, which the world saw not. (2) If He will shew one sign He can gain the favour of the king and all his court. He sheweth it not. Behold a second miracle. Here be mighty works within thy power to perform. Hold thy peace amid contempt and mockery; for love of Christ love to be set at nought and brought low; and thou hast wrought a wonderful work. Avoid the favour of the great; and thou hast performed a miracle.

3. *And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe.* Luke xxiii. 11.

(1) The eternal wisdom of God is humbled to

receive the name and livery of a fool, that I with my eager thirst for reputation may be cured of pride. Thou wert willing to look foolish for my sake, and therein I own Thy love for me. Thou didst choose the foolish things of the world: then for Thy sake make me infatuate. (2) The white and gorgeous robe testifieth thine innocency. That is the robe I lost in the Garden of Eden; and Thou hast sought and found it, that Thou mayest restore it unto me by Thy grace. I thank Thee, Lord: and I will keep it unspotted, that so arrayed I may be meet to be admitted to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

TUESDAY

BARABBAS IS PREFERRED TO CHRIST.

1. *Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus.* Matthew xxvii. 17.

On the one side is set wickedness and crime, a robber and a sinner; on the other, Holiness and Innocence, the Holy One, yea, the very God. To compare Him to a Seraph were to insult His Majesty, forasmuch as comparison lieth not but between things commensurate. Pilate doth no more than refuse to place Him lower than the lowest. That insult, once inflicted by Pilate, thou renewest when thou settest love of the creature in the balance against love of Christ; when thou art as ready to obey thine own lusts as the law of God. What hast thou done?

2. *But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude they should ask Barabbas.* Matthew xxvii. 20.

Barabbas hath his advocates: Jesus hath none. Do thou offer thyself to plead the cause of Him whom thou hopest to have as Advocate with the

Father. Take righteousness for thy client whensoever thou mayest; and hale Barabbas to judgment. Say to thy soul, Let Barabbas be crucified; let my most evil passion be slain and perish; and long live Jesus in my soul.

3. *And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.* Luke xxiii. 18.

If it was an insult even to compare Christ with Barabbas, how much more to give the preference to that son of wickedness. The great God permitteth Himself to be set in the lowest place: shall the dust of the earth be vexed if it be used for lowly duties? Art thou angered at the madness of the multitude? Why then doest thou the like, when thou preferrest the things of the flesh to the things of the spirit; the honour of the world to the honour of God? Is not this the crowning insult?

WEDNESDAY

PILATE YIELDETH TO THE MADNESS OF THE PEOPLE.

1. *Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.* Matthew xxvii. 22.

Too much the governor yielded to the multitude: now hath he lost the mastery. Their insolence put him in fear; his fear increased their boldness; until at the last he dared not set free the Innocent, but must crave a verdict from the maddened crowd. Shew thou compassion for thy Jesus in His shame; and learn that thou must never give way one inch to thy crowd of sensual passions; else thou dost but strengthen their insolence, and weaken thine own will for good. Ask thyself, What shall I do with

Jesus? And answer, I will save Him from many an insult by hindering every sin, as far as in me lies. How much hate and contumely they shew, so much love and honour will I pay.

2. *When Pilate saw that . . . rather a tumult was made, he . . . washed his hands . . . saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.* Matthew xxvii. 24.

Pilate by many devices sought to save Jesus from the madness of the people; but in all he sought also his own advantage. So it came to pass that his own cause won the day, and the cause of Christ was lost. In vain he washeth his hands when it is his heart that he hath defiled. To avoid a tumult he putteth the Innocent to death; how can such an one plead innocence? Learn thou these lessons: (1) That thou purify thy love for God and mingle not self-love therewith. In thy work for God, look not to thine own concerns, else will they in the end absorb thy whole regard. (2) Stand not on fine points when thou upholdest the cause of God against the crowd of thy passions, else will they prove thy masters. (3) Lay not the blame of thine ill deeds on other men.

3. *Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.* Matthew xxvii. 25.

O Blood of God, into what contempt art thou fallen: as though none would ever require thee; as though thou wouldest not cry unto heaven, speaking better things than that of Abel! The Jews have that reward for which they clamoured. Now will I say, but tenderly, *His blood be on me*, that therein I may make white my soul, *and on all I do*, that I may ever unite it to the Blood and the merits of Christ.

THURSDAY

CHRIST IS SCOURGED.

1. *Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.* John xix. 1.

Ponder the delicacy of His bodily texture, the heaviness of the scourges with their metal points, the cruel hearts of them that wielded them, the many stripes they laid upon Him, and see how horrible the torture He endured. But worst of all the torments to His chaste soul was the shame of nakedness. Think with compassion on the laceration of Christ. Acknowledge that thou art the cause thereof: yea, for *The sinners*¹ *ploughed upon His back* (Psalm cxxix. 3). Learn to submit thyself to the hand of God when He smiteth thee, since He submitted Himself to the hands of the officers: and say with Him *I am ready for the scourges*² (Psalm xxxviii. 17).

2. *Pilate took Jesus and scourged him.* John xix. 1.

Consider the virtues most notably exercised by Christ when He was scourged. (1) His great love for us, in that He took upon Himself the *great plagues* which *remain for the ungodly* (Psalm xxxii. 11), the plagues which were our due. Endure hardness, and so prove thy love. (2) His humility, in that He submitted Himself to this shameful punishment, the punishment of none but slaves. *We shall see him . . . despised and rejected of men* (Isaiah liii. 2, 3). Measure thine own humility, whether it go as low as this. (3) His unconquered fortitude and patience. *He stood like a giant, unafraid.* How standest thou in time of adversity? *Here is patience beyond the reach of mortal man*, saith Tertullian. And how behavest thou thyself, if thou be smitten with but one harsh word? Assailed by calumny He

¹ Vulgate, *Peccatores*.

² *Ibid.*, *In flagella paratus sum*.

kept silence and so triumphed. Knowest thou how to be silent? (4) The glad conformity of His will with the will of God. *Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness* (Psalm xxx. 12).

3. *And scourged him.* John xix. 1.

Consider the tradition, related by S. Austin, that one of the officers, moved by the horror of the punishment, cried aloud *Would ye kill him before he be condemned to die?*; that he cut the thongs which bound Him to the pillar; and that Jesus fell to the ground, all rolled in His own Blood. Ah, draw thou near, and clasp to thy bosom that dear Blood that it be no more trampled by others' feet, or thine. And when thus thou thinkest upon Jesus scourged for thee, thou must not pamper daintily thine own flesh.

FRIDAY

JESUS IS CROWNED WITH THORNS.

1. *And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.* Matthew xxvii. 28.

King of kings and Lord of lords, He is made king in mockery. First He is clad in the royal purple. But for such clothing He must first be stripped: His garments, all clinging to His flesh, must be rent therefrom with grievous pain. Think of the shame which Jesus felt, naked again before the eyes of the evil-minded soldiery. Then for disgrace He is clothed in the purple. Yea, even so: the world's honour is the disgrace of Christ; Christ's honour the disgrace of the world. Wise be thy choice: firm be thy hold thereon.

2. *And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head.* Matthew xxvii. 29.

(1) Is it thus, O Lord, that Thou hast crowned Him with glory and honour? Even so : in Christ's Kingdom all the crowns have thorns. (2) Go forth : behold thy King wearing the diadem wherewith thou hast crowned Him. Crowning thyself with roses, thou hast left thy Jesus nought but the thorns. (3) It is thy evil thoughts and judgments which have thus pierced His head. This must thou confess and lament. Thou must make His sufferings thine, and hear Him say that He owneth not a dainty member when the Head is crowned with thorns.

3. *And a reed in his right hand, for a mock sceptre : and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him with their hands. And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.* Matthew xxvii. 29, 30 ; John xix. 3.

Perpend the mockeries. Mark well the affections of the Heart of Christ. Make thine own the sufferings of thy most loving King. Dedicate to His service all thou doest. Make thyself the reed that is put into His hand. Bow the knee, and worship Him, Hail, my King. Wipe away the spittle. If there be for thee no blows, yet welcome in His stead, on His behalf, all other injuries that may befall thee.

SATURDAY

BEHOLD THE MAN.

1. *Behold, I bring him forth unto you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.* John xix. 4.

Draw thou also nigh and behold this sight. In Him is no fault or cause of punishment, but in thee : for love's sake He hath made thy cause His own. Is this the countenance which shone on Mount Tabor?

Outwardly, *a very scorn of men, and the out-cast of the people* (Psalm xxii. 6); inwardly, *fairer than the children of men* (Psalm xlv. 3). Consider then that this is the pattern set before thee that thou mayest conform thy life thereto.

2. *And Pilate saith unto them, Behold, the man!* John xix. 5.

So Pilate speaketh unto the Jews, in the hope that for pity's sake they may cease to clamour for His death. Hear thou the Eternal Father speak unto thee the selfsame words: *Behold, the man*; even to thee who didst lie sick of the palsy, and hadst no man to rescue thee; now seest thou the Man who is ready to heal all thine infirmities. Display them before His eyes in all humility. Put thy trust in this Man, and in none other; lest in that day God utter this reproach: *Lo, this is the man that took not God for his strength* (Psalm lii. 8). *Behold, the man* who fell into thy hands, as *among thieves*, and thou hast *stripped him, and wounded him, and left him half dead. Behold the man* to whom alone in all thy doings thou must ever look.

3. *When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, Crucify him.* John xix. 6.

Their cruelty is yet insatiate. To their clamour they now add an argument: *By our law he ought to die. Wherefore? because he made himself the Son of God.* If then thou wouldest be a son of God, then oughtest thou to die? Yea, verily: the old man ought to die, that the new man may live. Cry out then against thyself, *Crucify him*: crucify the old man with his lusts.

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

PILATE SITTETH A SECOND TIME UPON THE JUDGMENT-SEAT.

1. *When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; and went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.* John xix. 8, 9.

Consider (1) Pilate's fear. He knew Christ to be innocent and desired to let Him go, but he feared the people. Now that he hath heard that He made Himself the Son of God, and that His deeds disagreed not with that saying, he is the more afraid, lest haply he condemn a Son of God. Wherefore he asketh, *Whence art thou?* Had he but quelled his fearfulness at the outset, the struggle were not now so perilous. He that once yieldeth to the assault of passion, findeth it grow ever more strong. Resist the first assault. And do thou also ask the question, *Whence art Thou?* that thou mayest take good heed of God. (2) He answered him nothing, lest His answer should set Him free. Such was His love for thee: so greatly He desired to finish that work of our salvation that He had begun.

2. *Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.* John xix. 10, 11.

(1) Behold, a second time that light which he had to set Christ free is quenched by pride. Thus a man leapeth from one surrender to another, and passion helpeth passion to his destruction. (2) Ponder Christ's answer, and apply it to thyself in all time of adversity. True it is that no adversity can do aught against thee except it be given it from above. Own

then that all thine adversities are from above; even though God use His creatures as instruments to bring them upon thee.

3. *Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend.* John xix. 12.

A potent stratagem. To keep Cæsar's friendship, he casteth God away. Ah, the injustice, the folly of it! He was afraid where no fear was. So do men daily: haply thou art of their number. We act in despite of God that we may keep man for our friend. Ponder the depth of such a wrong.

MONDAY

PILATE GIVETH SENTENCE UPON CHRIST.

1. *And Pilate saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him.* John xix. 14, 15.

Still he openeth his ears to the clamour of the multitude and hearkeneth thereto: therefore languisheth his lukewarm defence. Thou art ill-protected against the assaults of thy passions, if thou hearken to their voice. Ever will they cry out, bidding thee prefer the easier to the better way. While they cry out for His destruction, do thou own Him King. Offer thy heart to be His throne, and implore Him to reign therein.

2. *Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar.* John xix. 15.

Ah, their blindness! Cæsar, who had despoiled them of their liberty, is acclaimed their king: Christ, who came to set them free, is rejected. And thou, how often dost thou give honour to the tyrant of thy

soul, and scornest Christ! The one suggesteth somewhat to thee, and thou hearkenest as to a command; the other, and thou holdest it in contempt. Say rather, I have no King, but Jesus the Christ.

3. *Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified.* John xix. 16.

Consider (1) the iniquity of the sentence. Again and again he hath declared Him innocent: yet he condemneth Him. (2) The cruelty thereof. As saith S. Luke (xxiii. 25) *he delivered Him to their will*, yea, to the will of His bitter enemies who raged against Him. (3) Yet remember that it was not as the sentence of the Governor that Jesus received His condemnation, but as the decree of His Eternal Father for the salvation of the world. Let me learn to deliver myself willingly to the will of God, who so readily *delivered Himself to their will*.

TUESDAY

THE BEARING OF THE CROSS.

1. *And he bearing his cross went forth.* John xix. 17.

Consider (1) the joyful affection wherewith He embraced that cross He had so long desired, thirsting to bear thereon our sins; a deeper joy than Andrew's when his cross was laid on him. Yet it was a heavy burden, loaded with thy sins. Marvel to see Him thus accept the cross, and loathe thine own self, complaining that thy duties are heavier than thou canst bear. (2) He shrinketh not from the shame of the cross, a felon's punishment, nor from its weight, so heavy for his weakened frame. These be the cause of thy faint-heartedness. Yet there is no shame in the following of Jesus; thy weakness will be sup-

ported by His strength; nay, beneath the cross thy very falls will be glorious.

2. *As they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross. Matthew xxvii. 32.*

Simon, by violence made partaker of Christ's shame, accepted the grace of illumination, and was made partaker of His glory. Such was His bounty to one under compulsion: what will it not be to a willing participator? Do thou willingly make thyself Christ's fellow, or, if that may not be, accept Simon's part. Shrink not from the weight, the judgments of men, the shame. If thou suffer with Him, thou shalt also reign with Him.

3. *And there followed him a great company of people, and of women. Luke xxiii. 27.*

(1) How various the affections of their hearts! Some followed to crucify Him, others to mock, others for curiosity, others for human friendship: but not one, *to take up his cross, and follow Him*. See thou that this be the affection of thy heart as thou followest. (2) When once He had taken up the cross, He bore it with constancy all the way to the hill of Calvary. Many were the difficulties encountered on that way; the heaviness of the cross, His own weakness, the shame, the mockery of men: yet He never laid it down. [Thou art not bidden to bear the cross one hour, but all thy life.]

WEDNESDAY

JESUS CRUCIFIED.

1. *They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. Matthew xxvii. 34.*

(1) Jesus, the Sweetness of all hearts, is given gall to drink. He tasted, that even the palate should endure its proper torment : but He would not drink, lest the bowels of His mercy should be embittered. Yea, the world proffereth its wine-cup, but the pure fruit of the grape is not therein. It minglcth its delights with gall. Drink it not; *for at the last it biteth like a serpent* (Proverbs xxiii. 32). (2) He drinketh it not, for that it is mingled with gall. The best wine giveth no delight if there be dregs of naughtiness. An unrighteous intent spoileth all good works. Perform thy works in such wise that there be no mingling of pretence, or self-seeking, or self-love.

2. *There they crucified him.* Luke xxiii. 33.

(1) Hear the words of S. Ambrose : *Naked he mounted the cross: therefore let him that meaneth to overcome the world so mount his cross that he seek not the comforts of the world.* Jesus, the Model of poverty, brought nothing into the world and carrieth nothing out. He loveth not the cross that loveth not poverty : for none but the naked duly hang thereon. (2) Consider the stretching of His hands and feet, and the pain when the nails pierced them through, and suffer thyself to be stretched upon the cross of obedience, and fastened to thine appointed place and office, howsoever hard and difficult it be. (3) Consider how Christ gave thanks to the Eternal Father for that hour wherein He should finish His work : how He offered Himself in sacrifice for the sins of the world, yea, and for thy sins one by one. What return canst thou make for that great love wherewith He loved thee and gave Himself for thee?

3. *And two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.* John xix. 18.

Thus would they multiply the shame, making Him seem chief among the wicked. Consider what they be that here are crucified. One a wicked malefactor,

another a converted man, the third the Son of God, and very Innocence. Just and unjust have each his cross. Be not thou crucified for thy wicked life, nor by thine ill deeds justify thy cross : be not crucified against thy will, and thus lose all the merit thou mightest have. Be crucified with Christ, willingly, joyfully, and for obedience sake.

THURSDAY

THE LOTS CAST FOR HIS GARMENTS. THE TITLE.
THE BLASPHEMIES.

1. *Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it.*
John xix. 23, 24.

First the outer raiment of Christ was divided into four parts : but the inner raiment, being without seam, was kept whole. The faithful are the garments of Christ. They that lie not right close to His Body are rent apart. He that hath not the foundation of the love of God lacketh also the love of his neighbour. He that keepeth nigh unto God through charity is nigh likewise unto his neighbour. The very Jews durst not rend the seamless garments, as thou hast done, when thou hast made a rent in Christian charity. Henceforth say thou : *Let me not rend it.*

2. *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.*
John xix. 19.

The Wise Men gave Him that selfsame title at His birth which now in the hour of His death His foes bestow. Thus is His power and government established. Alas, there be those that will have that title blotted out, and will not have Him for their King. Yet now will I take Him for my Jesus and my

Saviour, Jesus of Nazareth, comely and beloved, yea, even amid His torments. I will have Him for my King; none other shall my soul take for her Lord: and that I may never go away from Christ, I will be crucified with Him by nails of fear, and love, and mortification.

3. *They . . . reviled him.* Matthew xxvii. 39.

They cast in His teeth His impotence to save Himself, His claim to royal dignity, His vain trust in God, His empty boast to be His Son. All such reproaches will have an end, if He will but come down from the cross. Thus they speak: *Let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.* But all in vain. He that is Son of God cometh not down from the cross. The very mark of a son of God is this, that having taken his cross he abide to the end and die thereon, by constant mortification of himself, and daily stablishing of his vocation.

FRIDAY

CHRIST'S FIRST AND SECOND WORDS UPON THE CROSS.

1. *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* Luke xxiii. 34.

He hath ever kept silence in His own cause, but in theirs He breaketh it. And the first cause He pleadeth is not His loving Mother's, but the executioners'. Weigh well each word. He calleth God *Father* to move all to filial loyalty, to teach us that He is Father of the evil as of the good, yea, and to teach thee to hold thyself brother unto all. *Them*: He limiteth not mercy to them that crucified Him now, but reckoneth with them all that should yet do so, even all that should sin. See, thou thyself art not shut out: so mayest thou raise thy hopes. *They know not what they do.* He useth to the uttermost the excuse

of ignorance; for truly *the sinner is ever ignorant*, and knoweth not the gravity of his sin. What doest thou when one hath offended thee? Thou must pray for such, and forgive them, and, as much lieth in thee, make excuse.

2. *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.* Luke xxiii. 42.

(1) The good thief rebuketh the railing of his companion, confesseth his own sin, beareth witness to the innocence of Christ, hath faith in His Divinity, and with full hope beseecheth Him, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.* See what God's grace can do in a moment of time, if it be accepted. (2) The thief asketh to be remembered, not to be loosed from the cross. If God will deign to remember a man, that is sufficient for him. (3) There be two that hang beside Christ. The one is converted, who may not hope? the other is condemned, who shall not fear, yea, though he be near neighbour unto Jesus?

3. *Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* Luke xxiii. 43.

Behold the loving-kindness of Jesus. He giveth more than is asked. For, (1) He delayeth not the fulfilment of His promise: *To-day.* (2) *With me.* Here is consolation indeed, to be with Jesus. Dost thou likewise desire to be with Him in Paradise? Then first be thou with Him on the cross. *Only through great tribulations*, saith S. Gregory, *may man come to great rewards.* If thou suffer with Him, thou shalt also reign with Him.

SATURDAY

THE THIRD WORD TO HIS MOTHER AND TO JOHN.

1. *There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother.* John xix. 25.

How deep was the woe of the most holy Mother, who loved her Son surpassingly! *Jesus*, whom she knew to be God and Man: *by*, yea, she stood there and gazed upon the sight; *the cross*, that instrument of torment and shame unspeakable. Yet she *stood*, and in spirit offered her Son for the salvation of the world. *I read that she stood*, saith S. Ambrose; *I read not that she wept*. And Amadeus addeth, *For in such bitterness of heart so to stand bespeaketh wondrous constancy*. Learn then (1) in time of adversity to stand, constant in mind and heart and will, and never to surcease thy spiritual exercises. (2) Never so to set thine heart on any creature nor on any spiritual consolation that thou be not willing to lose it if God will, if thy neighbour's salvation demand it.

2. *When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by . . . he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!* John xix. 26.

He leaveth John to His Mother in place of Himself. Yet what comparison can there be of one with the Other? What manner of consolation is this? A mere man, to take the place of God! Without all doubt the most Blessed Virgin ever saw Christ in John. Thou too must learn to see Christ in all thy neighbours; thus will thy charity increase; but especially in thy superiors; thus will thine obedience be more exact. But why leaveth He John to His Mother? (1) Theophylact seeth herein the privilege of virginity. Himself a Virgin He commendeth a virgin disciple to a Virgin Mother. (2) It was because he also stood by the cross. *So good a thing it is*, saith he, *to stand by the suffering Christ. So taketh He him for His brother*. See by what means thou mayest find thyself Christ's brother and the Virgin's son. Behold the price of these fair titles!

3. *Then saith he to the disciple, Behold, thy mother!* John xix. 27.

(1) S. Ambrose saith, *He, being called by Christ, left his father. The Virgin is commended to one that knoweth not his own.* What consolation, if she were given thee for thy Mother! And this may be thy dower, if for the love of Jesus thou knowest not thine own and riddest thyself of carnal love towards them.

(2) If thou wilt fit thyself in all things to the will of God, thou mayest be brother of Jesus, and therefore son of Mary. *Whosoever shall do the will of my Father . . . the same is my brother,* Matthew xii. 50. Thus mayest thou become of one blood with Him.

PALM SUNDAY

THE FOURTH AND FIFTH WORDS OF CHRIST.

1. *About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying . . . My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Matthew xxvii. 46.

S. Leo saith: *This is not the voice of reproach but of doctrine.* He teacheth us of the depth of Christ's sufferings, inasmuch that He would not assuage them even by the interior sense of the presence of God. Think then of the many consolations which thou art ever begging, and not from God alone but from the creatures. *It is a great thing, saith Thomas à Kempis, yea, great indeed to have the strength to go without all consolation, human and Divine; to have the will, for the honour of God, to endure an exile of thy heart from Him, and to seek thyself in nothing.*

2. *Jesus . . . that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.* John xix. 28.

(1) He knew that He had fulfilled all that was written of Him in the Scripture but this one thing:

When I was thirsty they gave me vinegar to drink, Psalm lxix. 21. This also then He would fulfil. Behold how Christ marketh well each tittle of obedience. (2) Great was the thirst that sprang from the shedding of so much blood, but greater yet the thirst to suffer more. *He had another thirst, saith Blossius, the thirst to suffer yet more deeply, and to shew His love for us more clearly.* How wouldest thou refresh Him, if thou wouldest but give to Him thy soul! Examine thine own love for God and for the salvation of thy neighbours. What dost thou long to suffer for them?

3. *Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.* John xix. 29.

God, exhausted and dying, is refreshed with a little vinegar and hyssop. Behold how even in the midst of His labours He giveth an example of breaking earthly appetite. Think not that sumptuous fare is due to thee. In the school of Christ, the greater the service the less reward in this world. Christ's servant never looketh for indulgence. (2) They offer vinegar to God who pass the best of their days in earthly and carnal pursuits, and think to give to God the dregs of their old age. (3) The vessel full of vinegar is the heart that is embittered and full of malice or impatience. Ah, empty out the vinegar and fill thy vessel with the sweet wine of charity!

MONDAY

THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH WORDS OF CHRIST.

1. *It is finished.* John xix. 30.

Even that work which the Father commanded and which I took upon Me. It is God's property ever to perform that He hath begun. A good beginning meriteth but faint praise: full meed thereof awaiteth

the completed work. Not the beginning but the completion bringeth the reward. How many be thine undertakings! How few thou carriest through to the end! Do thou imitate the Divine perseverance, that in thy last hour thou too mayest have power to say It is finished: all that God enjoined by His commandments, that I undertook by His counsels, that my rules demanded, that His grace suggested unto me. Ah then how happy shalt thou be! But now how far art thou from such an end!

2. *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.*
Luke xxiii. 46.

Ponder the words. *Father*, the word of confidence and love. But thou mayest not use it, unless thou live in love, reverence, obedience, as a son should do. *Into thy hands*, wherein alone is true peace and security. Commit thyself into those hands now by perfect resignation of thy will to His, that thou mayest abide in them for ever. *I commend my spirit*: but not my body. That now lieth still upon the bed of the cross. Learn to care for the spirit more than for the body. But, that thy spirit may pass securely into the hands of God, see that thy body be ever on the cross. There is no other bridge of safety: the rest be perilous.

3. *And he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*
John xix. 30.

(1) The Death of God: sublimest mystery! Thou mayest not reach thereunto unless thou first shalt learn the power of love. For thee He dieth. Behold, O man, the price God setteth on thee. Truly said the Apostle: *Ye are bought with a price* (1 Cor. vi. 20), yea, a great price, even the death of Christ. How wilt thou repay thy debt, lest thou be found an ingrate? Bow thy head humbly and give up thy ghostly pride. (2) Incline thy head in obedience even unto the departing of thy spirit: *incline thy heart to perform God's statutes* (Psalm cxix. 112).

TUESDAY

THE PRODIGIES AT THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

1. *Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.* Matthew xxvii. 51.

Shewing that the ancient law was now destroyed. (1) Let the death of Christ accomplish the selfsame work in thee, and destroy the old law that is in thy members. Jesus was slain : behold the most effectual motive for the slaying of the old man. (2) *It was rent*, that henceforth there might be no veil over the holy. Frivolity of mind is like a veil wherewith we obscure the things of God. Let it be rent, that thou mayest see them clearly. Hast thou not herewith too often blinded thine own eyes?

2. *The earth did quake, and the rocks rent.* Matthew xxvii. 51.

Thus nature testified her sympathy. Shame on the man whose sorrow at the death of Christ attaineth not to that of the base elements of the world. *Dust of the earth thou art* : thou hast heard those words ere now ; *dust of the earth*, for that thy love is set upon earthly things. God hath suffered death. That thought should stir thee to the depths, and move thee to fling off all that yet binds thee to the earth. Thou canst not grieve with Him except thou love : and thou canst not love Jesus if thou love aught besides. *Rock* thou art, heavy with the weight of sin, hard with the obstinate love of thine own judgment and thine own will. Let the thought of Christ's death enter thine inmost heart and rend it in contrition.

3. *And the graves were opened.* Matthew xxvii. 52.

(1) The very dead are rescued from the dominion of death, to shew that by His death Christ hath destroyed death. Be the same work accomplished within thee by the death of Christ. Let the sepulchre

of thy conscience be laid open and bare before Him who hath the right to look therein. (2) Let the whited sepulchre of thine hypocrisy be opened, that thou mayest appear as thou art, not as thou feignest thyself to be. (3) Let the sepulchre of evil habits be opened, and cast them forth, that henceforth thou mayest *walk in newness of life*.

WEDNESDAY

THE AFFECTIONS OF DIVERS PERSONS AT THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

1. *And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.* Mark xv. 39.

(1) The tremors of the elements roused fear in the centurion; fear led him to more searching thought concerning the Author thereof: hence followed recognition, and that noble confession of faith. How many others saw the same sights unmoved! Strange be the ways of God in the turning of men's hearts. Let the sights of nature teach thee to lift thy heart to the Author of all, and confess Him and magnify His Name. (2) Amidst all the vileness of the Passion he confesseth God: what saw he therein that was Divine? If there be aught Divine in thee, be sure that it will most shine forth and prove itself in adversity and contempt.

2. *And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.* Luke xxiii. 48.

It was the common people, not the chief priests, whose hearts were somewhat moved. Seldom indeed the proud and obstinate experience a good affection.

Yet amongst the people there were none who owned Him God. Wherefore? (1) Because they *came together* only as it were to a *sight*. Why doth the Lord's Passion so rarely move thee? Why art thou so lukewarm in the contemplation thereof? Peradventure because in thy meditation it is to thee only a sight, and not the proof of His goodness, His love, His mercy. (2) They *returned*. To gaze and then depart—what profit remaineth thereafter? It behoveth thee to abide constant near the Crucified, and let Him feed thy mind and soul.

3. *And all his acquaintance, and the women . . . stood afar off, beholding these things.* Luke xxiii. 49.

Tenderly they wept for Jesus' death. *Afar off*: that is not good: we must draw nigh to contemplate the death of Christ. Peter fell because he followed afar off. Never would I be far from Jesus. Yet, though they came not nigh, they *stood*, to behold Jesus, and to be beheld of Him while He yet lived. They *stood*—that is constancy: they *beheld*—that is contemplation. The heart drew nigh, though the body remained afar. Do thou persevere in the constant picturing to thyself of the life and death of Christ.

THURSDAY

HIS SIDE IS PIERCED WITH A SPEAR.

1. *But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs.* John xix. 33.

Jesus died sooner than the Jews expected: peradventure they had indignation that they could no more glut their rage with the anguish of His body. It was Divine love that thus hastened His death,

that He might the more swiftly accomplish the work of our redemption. How blessed wouldst thou be if, assaulted by the malice of the devil or man, thou shouldst be found already dead to thyself, to the world and to thy lusts through sturdy self-denial! Thus mayest thou keep thy bones unbroken, thy virtue all intact. Without mortification virtue is never safe.

2. *One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side.* John xix. 34.

The portal of love is opened, and all his griefs gush forth. Behold the bitter pains thou hast inflicted on that heart; the poison of thy sins! Behold how He hath loved thee! See how large be the letters of love wherewith He hath inscribed thee in the book of the children of God! His feet He gave to sinners, as to that woman that was such (Luke vii. 38); His hands to His friends, as to Peter (Matthew xiv. 31). His heart He giveth to the children of God, to whom He saith, *Ye shall be borne upon her sides* (Isaiah lxvi. 12). Now therefore call to mind His love and thine own ingratitude. Look on Him now with love, lest one day thou look with trembling on *him whom thou hast pierced*.

3. *And forthwith came there out blood and water.* John xix. 34.

Here be the holy Sacraments, the medicines apt for our salvation, to cleanse us from sin and adorn us with grace. Is this but a little token of His love? Nay, but how great! For thee He shed the last drop of His blood. *So munificent is the price paid for redemption that the worth of man seemeth to be God* (Eusebius). How great is God's liberality towards thee! How mean thine own response who sheddest not one tear for all that blood!

GOOD FRIDAY

THE CONTEMPLATION OF JESUS CRUCIFIED.

1. *All ye that pass by, behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.* Lamentations i. 12.

Consider the torments of Christ. (1) In His Body. *They pierced my hands and my feet; I may tell all my bones* (Psalm xxii. 17). *From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in Him.* (2) In His Soul: from the scorn He suffered, from the busy mockers (Psalm xxxv. 16). *I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day* (Lamentations iii. 14). From the shame of the cross, and the thieves, His companions. *He was numbered with the transgressors* (Isaiah liii. 12). From the lack of any that would shew compassion or comfort. *Among all His lovers He hath none to comfort Him: all His friends have dealt treacherously with Him, they are become His enemies* (Lamentations i. 2). *I looked for some to have pity on me, but there was no man, neither found I any to comfort me* (Psalm lxix. 21). From the ingratitude of men, and the scanty fruit of His Passion. *What profit is there in my blood?* (Psalm xxx. 9). *What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?* (Isaiah v. 4).

2. *What are these wounds in thine hands?* (Zechariah xiii. 6).

Ask it of Jesus, and hearken to His answer: *Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.* Own that His love is without limit. Hear what S. Austin saith: *Behold this head bowed for your kiss, this heart opened for your love, these arms stretched forth for your embrace, this whole body exposed for your redemption: ponder ye the majesty*

of each and all: weigh them in the balances of your hearts: and let your hearts cleave fast to Him who for your sakes was all fastened to the cross. Verily He hath loved us, and hath given himself for us (Ephesians v. 2). Think that thou hearest Him ask thee, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? (John xxi. 17). Make answer with all thy heart, Lord . . . thou knowest that I love thee.

3. *He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them (2 Corinthians v. 14).*

Let this be the fruit thou gatherest from the death of Christ: devote not thy life nor any of thine actions to thyself, nor to thine own advantage, nor delight, nor honour. Thou owest unto Him thyself and all thou hast. *Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price (1 Corinthians vi. 19, 20). What reward, saith S. Bernard, shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits which he hath done unto me? He gave me first myself, and then Himself: giving Himself, He gave me myself again. Given then, and given again, I owe myself twice over in return for myself. But for Himself what shall I give unto God?*

HOLY SATURDAY

THE TAKING DOWN OF THE BODY OF CHRIST FROM THE
CROSS AND THE BURIAL THEREOF.

1. *Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple, but secretly for fear of the Jews, went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. Matthew xxvii. 57; John xix. 38; Mark xv. 43.*

(1) There is but one that craveth that Body on the cross: how few be the lovers of Jesus crucified!
(2) He that before concealed himself for fear now

declareth himself a disciple, when Jesus hangeth on the cross. Such is the fruit of the Passion. If I see thee own Him God and follow after Him through all contempt and shame, and that boldly, fearing nought of danger, then I will believe that in thee His Passion hath not been in vain.

2. And there came also Nicodemus . . . and brought a mixture of myrrh. . . . John xix. 39.

(1) Out of all the disciples there be two that shew their love to Jesus crucified. Dare thou to be a third?

(2) Consider the offices that they perform. They take down the body from the cross : they embalm it with spices ; they wrap it in linen ; and these men of noble rank bear on their shoulders Him that was scorned of all. See them put their nobility at the service of the despised Christ, and deny not thy poor service to Him that still receiveth scorn. Perform thou the same offices to Christ in the members of His Body, even thine own neighbours. Take down the afflicted from their cross by spiritual consolation : embalm them with spices by care for their good name ; wrap their defects in the linen covering of silence.

3. And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock : and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre. Matthew xxvii. 60.

As often as thou receivest Christ, thou dost bury Him in thy heart. Do thou then provide the same observances. Let the tomb be new, untenanted by any ill desire : let it be in the rock, constant and unmovable ; roll thereunto the stone of efficacious resolutions ; surround it with the watch of holy thoughts.

EASTER SUNDAY

1. *He rose again the third day according to the scriptures.* 1 Cor. xv. 4.

Joy followeth hard on sorrow. God seemeth to have ordained that the way shall be rough that leadeth unto pleasure. Christ heralded the glory of His Resurrection with three and thirty years of hardness of life and three days of bitterest suffering. Thy road to glory is the same. If thou be dead with Him, thou shalt also live with Him.

2. *I laid me down and slept, and rose up again.* Psalm iii. 5.

The soul of Christ is joined again unto His body, that the partner of His suffering might be partner also of His Resurrection. In a moment of time the bruises and the wounds are gone: in their stead come beauty and grace. Oh, the joy of body and soul! the answering joy of angel hosts! Come thou to Christ and bring the like with thee; and, that thy joy may be full, do thou, a member of Christ's body, join thyself unto His soul in love.

3. *Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* Romans vi. 4.

Thou reapest the fruit of the Resurrection of Christ, if thou dost walk in newness of life. But thou walkest not in newness of life unless thou slay the old man. As He entered not into eternal life but by bodily death; so likewise thou mayest not enter the new life of perfection, unless through the Spirit thou mortify the deeds of the body.

MONDAY

OF THE ENDOWMENT OF THE GLORIFIED BODY.

1. *It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.* 1 Corinthians xv. 42.

The first endowment of the glorified body is impassibility which maketh it immune to death, sickness and wounds. *Death hath no more dominion over him* (Romans vi. 9). By what means did Christ attain it? By suffering and death. Thine own aim must be to suffer no corruption from any evil affection, whether in prosperity or adversity. Consider well how great is thy need of mortification to attain thereto.

2. *It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.* 1 Corinthians xv. 44.

The second endowment is subtlety, whereby it was able to pass through solid substance, such as would exclude the natural body. Thou needest to pass through all the difficulties that beset the path of virtue. Thou canst *do all things through Christ which strengtheneth thee* (Philippians iv. 13). But before such spiritual fruit can be raised, thou must first sow in the ground that animal nature, so careful for its own comfort.

3. *It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.* 1 Corinthians xv. 43.

The third endowment is agility whereby in a moment of time He shewed His presence where He would. Hast thou such swift agility in making answer unto godly inspirations, in seeking thy neighbour's ease, in making progress along the path of virtue? Art thou swift to sow thine old nature out of sight, knowing its weakness and humbling thyself unto the ground?

4. *It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory.*
1 Corinthians xv. 43.

The fourth endowment is clarity, whereby it shone above the brightness of the sun. *Let thy light so shine before men, that they may see thy good works* (Matthew v. 16). Never will that be unless thou first sow the seed in dishonour and self-denial.

TUESDAY

OF THE SCARS OF THE WOUNDS STILL VISIBLE IN THE
GLORIFIED BODY.

1. *What are these wounds in thine hands?*
Zechariah xiii. 6.

Eusebius telleth us that the wounds be retained in the glorified Body, *lest the illumination of glory should obscure the cause thereof*. He willed that it should be manifest eternally that He had purchased this glory by these wounds. But if this be the price of glory, what shall I have to shew that day, who will have nought of suffering? *Ought not Christ to have suffered . . . and to enter into his glory?* (Luke xxiv. 26). Will there be some other way marked out for me?

2. *Yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.* Isaiah xlix. 15, 16.

The second cause wherefore the scars be retained is for a memorial unto Christ of His love towards us for whom He willed to suffer all these things; that He may read in them the price of our salvation, and so may never cease to love them that have cost Him so dear. So then it is the will of Jesus to remember thee always. Forget not thou thy Saviour. It is created things that blot out the memory of God.

Forget them; or thou wilt not much remember Christ.

3. *And every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him.* Revelation i. 7.

The third cause is that one day He may display them to them that must be damned; reproach the cruelty of them that crucified Him by their sins, the ingratitude of them that made no answer to His love. But likewise that He may display them for ever to the blessed, that they may joy in that great love that shineth out from them. In what wise shalt thou behold them? with shame, or with joy?

WEDNESDAY

HE APPEARETH TO HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER.

1. *He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.* John xiv. 21.

It is not certain that Christ manifested Himself to His Mother, since the Evangelists record it not: yet it is a pious belief, inasmuch as beyond all others He loved her, and was loved by her. The lover ever hasteneth to the beloved as to his centre. Dost thou yet see Jesus manifested to thee in the light of holiness? Peradventure thou lovest Him not as thou oughtest. Jesus manifesteth Himself to them that love Him.

2. *In the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart: thy comforts have refreshed my soul.* Psalm xciv. 19.

Consider the consolation of the Virgin's heart, when she saw her Son. But thou canst not measure it unless thou first have weighed her sorrow in the Passion. The consolation is ever given in proportion

to the sorrow. Measure thy hope of consolation by the straitness of thy mortification and thine endurance of affliction.

3. *My soul failed when the Beloved spake.* Song of Solomon v. 6.

Consider the Virgin's deep longing for Christ while she yet awaited Him; and all her heart's emotion when her eyes beheld His face; the submission, the devotion, the adoration, the thankfulness for His great glory; the joy in the triumph of His Resurrection; the love. But the source of all was that first fervent longing after Jesus. Thou feelest not within thee such emotions as these. Stir then within thyself a fervent longing to see God and to know Him. All else will follow.

THURSDAY

THE HOLY WOMEN MAKE THEIR WAY TO THE LORD'S SEPULCHRE.

1. *Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared.* Luke xxiv. 1.

(1) The spices must be bought. They no longer possess what serveth unto vainglory. (2) They know full well that the body hath been already anointed by Joseph and Nicodemus: yet make they their ointment, considering not what others have done, but what they ought to do. (3) Full early they fare forth, despite the hindrance of the darkness, and, perchance, the sleepless night of mourners. (4) They come to the sepulchre all fearless of the guards. It was love that hastened their steps. If thou dost render unto Jesus the like service as theirs, then art thou His lover.

2. *And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone? Mark xvi. 3.*

They know the hindrance that besetteth their enterprise; and own their strength unequal to the overcoming thereof. Yet on they go. Behold their perseverance in a good endeavour, and their confidence in God that springeth from the love of Him. Ask thyself often, Who shall roll me away this stone of temptation, or difficulty, or hindrance of my work? lest through thine unreadiness thy task suffer a check. Trust in God when thine own strength faileth, and press forward in the work whereunto thou hast set thine hand.

3. *And, behold, there was a great earthquake: and when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away. Matthew xxviii. 2, Mark xvi. 4.*

See how the Divine providence ever giveth aid to perseverance and confidence. An earthquake rolleth away the stone and scattereth the guards, who might have hindered their enterprise. Thus is God ever present to help them that truly seek Him. He removeth all that might hinder their search, the oppositions of men and circumstances from without, and of use and habit from within: He scattereth our enemies the devils. Ponder the many times when thou hast found this true: persevere in thy good course; put thy trust in God.

FRIDAY

AN ANGEL DECLARETH THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST
UNTO THE HOLY WOMEN.

1. *And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. Matthew xxviii. 5.*

Behold a second consolation to them that are in fear yet seek after God! Why should they not fear the earthquake and the angel whose countenance was like lightning? Because they seek Jesus crucified. To such doth God send His consolations. But thou wilt never have them while thou yet seekest aught but Jesus, and Him crucified.

2. *He is not here: for he is risen, as he said.* Matthew xxviii. 6.

They seek for Jesus in the tomb. Truly they might grieve because He was not there: but had their love been set on Jesus' happiness, they had good cause for joy in His glorious Resurrection. Where seekest thou for Jesus? In thine own advantage? in created things? in the delights of the senses? How often doth Divine light make answer unto thee, *He is not here!* Yet how often hast thou sought Him in such things as these, all in vain and to thine own undoing! Hast thou not yet done with such quests as these?

3. *Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.* Matthew xxviii. 6, Luke xxiv. 3.

Truly it was in love that they sought Jesus: yet was it an earthly love that would see and touch and anoint His Body. Therefore they found Him not. The love that seeketh Jesus must be pure. Examine then thine own intentions: be they pure, and fixed on Jesus only, with no admixture of the love of self? The pure intention findeth Him: the mixed findeth Him not.

SATURDAY

THE WOMEN ARE REBUKED AND SENT TO BEAR TIDINGS
TO THE APOSTLES.

1. *And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?* Luke xxiv. 5.

They merit the rebuke, inasmuch they believe not that which the angels so plainly shew unto them. They do the like who will not follow, even in holy things, the guidance of their own spiritual vision, but will yet cleave fast to what the eye of sense can see. They seek for Jesus, and would give themselves to Him; yet seek they Him among the dead, with private judgment and self-love. Jesus is there where there is nothing of thyself.

2. *He is not here, but is risen.* Luke xxiv. 6.

Here shew they an infallible proof of the Resurrection: *he is not here.* Our spiritual resurrection must be proved by the selfsame argument: and proven would it be if a truth-speaking angel, not the flattery of our sensual nature, might say, *He is not here,* in this imperfection, in this evil affection, in this passion, in this spiritual lukewarmness which once held him fast. If that be so, rejoice: but if not, see to it.

3. *Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead.* Matthew xxviii. 7.

Such is the command which in Christ's name the angels give unto the women. The Apostles, who had so basely deserted Him, merited not tidings so glad. But Christ considered not what they deserved, but what His own love demanded. He loveth even them that deserve it not. Thus may I find consolation who know myself unworthy of my Lord's love. *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord: but deal with me according to thy loving-kindness.*

LOW SUNDAY

THE WOMEN BRING THE APOSTLES TIDINGS OF THE
RESURRECTION.

1. *Tell his disciples and Peter that he is risen.*
Mark xvi. 7.

The mention of Peter by name is a token of especial love for him. He had loved Jesus more than all; and his love was the measure of his sorrow; Jesus therefore gave him love for love. He ceased not to bewail his sin: Jesus would rouse him from grief by shewing him His love. Own thou with love the goodness of thy Lord, and put thy trust therein. He will not let thee go, nay though thy weakness have led thee into sin.

2. *And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.*
Luke xxiv. 9.

Tidings of Divine mysteries are brought to the shepherds by the sheep. The teachers are taught by the learners. Thou that rulest over the Church of God, be not ashamed to learn from those beneath thee, nor to marvel at the miracles of grace displayed in them. Envy not them that surpass thee in spiritual perception. Be humble and ready to learn from all.

3. *And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.* Luke xxiv. 11.

The women bring tidings of the fulfilment of the words of Christ to the Apostles, agreeing thereunto exactly: yet they believe not. Thou followest the like example of unbelief when thou puttest God's inspirations from thee as vain things, and countest for folly the advice of other men, their scruples, their remorse. Nay, mark such things, for by them God

leadeth thee. If thou follow not thou shalt lose thy way.

MONDAY

PETER AND JOHN RUN TO THE SEPULCHRE.

1. *Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. John xx. 3.*

They would test the verity of the women's tidings. Undeterred by the example of unbelief, they seek with prudence their own duty and heed not the actions of the rest. Behold the rule that thou thyself must follow.

2. *So they ran both together. John xx. 4.*

'Twas love that set them running, love that knoweth no sluggishness of effort. A will that goeth sluggishly to the service of God is not far removed from final disobedience. He that loveth the things of God flieth on wings towards them. Dost thou run, or dost thou crawl? Wilt thou make progress? Then foster love. Love and proficiency go side by side.

3. *The other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre . . . yet went he not in. John xx. 4, 5.*

The disciple whom Jesus loved came first. *It is not of man that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* Thou hast need of prevenient grace to come to Jesus. His be the glory, not thine own. And mark how true faith is humble and presumeth not. Trust not in thine own good works, but only in God's mercy. Great though thou be, *be not high-minded, but fear* (Romans xi. 20).

TUESDAY

THE MAGDALENE AT THE SEPULCHRE.

1. *But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre.* John xx. 11.

Mark the tokens of love. She standeth at the sepulchre. She weepeth. She looketh in longing to see Jesus. As erstwhile, it might be said of her: *She loved much* (Luke vii. 47). Consider the care thou givest to thy seeking after God. Dost thou stand firm in thy resolves? Dost thou grieve when thou hast lost Jesus? Dost thou consider where and how thou mayest find Him again?

2. *And seeth two angels in white sitting.* John xx. 12.

S. Cyril of Alexandria saith: *While she stayeth steadfastly nigh unto the sepulchre, the voice of angels aideth her to know Christ.* If thou wouldest entertain God's angels, which are spiritual illuminations, thou must not merely take thine hour of meditation by customary use: thou must fix steadfastly thine attention and thine affections; yea, and deplore thy blinded sight.

3. *They say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.* John xx. 13.

The loss of Jesus is the cause of her weeping. Truly the best cause, the only one that is worthy of tears. But if she weepeth because without her will or knowledge *they have taken Him away*, what shouldest thou do whose will and knowledge have so often suffered Jesus to be taken from thee by thine own passions and evil affections?

WEDNESDAY

CHRIST APPEARETH TO THE MAGDALENE WHO KNOWETH HIM NOT.

1. *She turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.* John xx. 14.

Even while she seeketh Him, Jesus standeth close behind the Magdalene. Behold, He is not far from them that seek Him with their whole heart. Yet sometimes He disguiseth His presence, so that we know not that He is here and think ourselves deserted. Turn we ourselves back, look we about to the hidden issue of our afflictions : there shall we see God.

2. *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?* John xx. 15.

(1) *He hideth himself, saith Drogo, that she may seek him the more ardently, and seeking may find him with joy, and finding may keep him with diligence.* (2) He questioneth her, not for lack of knowledge but for joy that we should sometimes suffer pain in longing after Him. If thou feel thyself deserted by God, seek Him the more ardently : so shalt thou find Him.

3. *She . . . saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.* John xx. 15.

Behold the potency of love which, all set on Christ, payeth scant attention to its words. *If thou have borne him hence*, she saith ; leaving *him* nameless, as though each passer-by must comprehend the reason of her sorrow. Well knowing the fury of the Jews, yet fearless of dangers, she undertaketh to *take him away*, wherever He may be. It was love that furnished that courage and that resolution. Far short thou fallest of such love, far distant therefore from such resolves.

THURSDAY

CHRIST SHEWETH HIMSELF TO THE MAGDALENE AND
SENDETH HER TO THE DISCIPLES.

1. *Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni.* John xx. 16.

Mary: Rabboni; great are the affections hidden under these single words; on Christ's part affections of kindness, gentleness, easiness, familiar love; on Mary's of reverence, humility, adoration, love, joy. By one word He is made known: by one word she betokeneth her knowledge of Him. In few words God can say much to man, and man likewise to God. Let thy thoughts concerning God be more than thy words.

2. *Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not.* John xx. 17.

Consider the cause of that prohibition. It was to moderate somewhat that excess of fervour wherewith she had thrown herself at Jesus' feet. Love had wellnigh forgotten reverence. God will be loved, but also reverently worshipped. Therefore, as thou shouldest be familiar with God through the intimacy of thy colloquies, so also thou must maintain reverence of bodily posture and composure of mind.

3. *Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father.* John xx. 17.

Mary was longing to lay her affections at Christ's feet; but He desired swift consolation for them that were His own. Therefore He wardeth her from Him and sendeth her on ambassage to His disciples, calling them by the loving name of *brethren*. See how acceptable it is to God that thou shouldest abstain from thine own spiritual consolation to console another in his sadness. He taketh care for the intimation of His Ascension to *your Father*: that they may begin to take thought of His departure, dispose themselves to endure it, and trust in that God who (their hearts tell them) is their Father too.

FRIDAY

HE APPEARETH TO THE OTHER WOMEN.

1. *Behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail.* Matthew xxviii. 9.

We may think that the Magdalene followed them and told them how she had seen the Lord; that they fell into a sadness that they had not tarried at the sepulchre, and into a longing that they also might see the Lord. Then, in such a frame, Jesus prevented them with His salutation, *All hail*. Such is the loving-kindness of God to them that long for Him and would do Him service. His consolation will not tarry if thou do but long after Him with all thy heart. Such longing is ever the first step towards perfection.

2. *And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.* Matthew xxviii. 9.

Ponder their joy, their reverence, the sweetness of their love, as they cast themselves at the feet of Christ. From the selfsame feet He had but now restrained the Magdalene. There be times when He offereth no present consolation: yet if one persevere He ever bestoweth it, but at the hour when it seemeth Him good. Nor is it the same consolation that He giveth unto all; but to each that which is best for that one. Thy part is to press on with thy good intent, and leave to God the time of thy consolation. When a man longeth after Him, He is never far away.

3. *Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.* Matthew xxviii. 10.

Ponder His gentleness in speaking to the women; yea, and in speaking of the Apostles who had of late deserted Him. Yet believe that His mind toward them was yet more gentle, without one whit of resentment against them that had given Him so grave

cause of offence. When one offendeth thee, remember that he is thy brother: count him worthy of gentle thought and word. He appointeth Galilee for to be seen of them, for its quietness and remoteness from all tumult. So, if thou wouldest taste of God, get thee far from the clamour of the world and its vanities, and of thine own passions likewise.

SATURDAY

HE APPEARETH UNTO PETER.

1. *(Peter) departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.* Luke xxiv. 12.

Peter hath seen the sepulchre empty. He departeth from John and in solitude pondereth on that he hath seen. To withdraw even from bodily contact with created things, and much more from ghostly love of them, is the surest way to the vision of God and the knowledge of the things of God. God loveth the soul's solitude. *I will . . . bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her* (Hosea ii. 14).

2. *The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.* Luke xxiv. 34.

The Lord appeareth not to John, who abode steadfast by the Cross, but to Peter, who had both fled and denied Him. So doth God ever hearten the penitent sinner, lest he be cast down. Thus sheweth He how dear He counteth the tears of the penitent. Think on the heart of Peter at that moment, the shame of his guilty conscience, his sorrow and his tears. Be thine the same affections as thou kneelest at Jesus' feet.

3. *He was seen of Cephas.* 1 Corinthians xv. 5.

Christ upbraideth not Peter for his sin, but with great tenderness consoleth him. Learn thou with

what kindness thou must ever receive the contrite sinner: with what charity thou must forget the wrongs thou hast suffered from thy neighbour. Look for God to do to thee as thou hast done to thy neighbour. *If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses* (Matthew vi. 15).

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

CHRIST JOINETH HIMSELF TO TWO DISCIPLES GOING TO
EMMAUS.

1. *Behold, two of them went . . . to a village called Emmaus.* Luke xxiv. 13.

Grieving for Christ's death and doubtful of His resurrection, they seek consolation from the town's distractions. They that should have waited on the promises of God betake themselves to the things of earthly sense. The promised third day had come: they had heard the testimony of the women, of Peter and of John; yet still their doubts remained. With how little patience wait we for the Lord who for all these years hath had patience with us! How readily betake we ourselves to earthly consolations! Beware thou of inordinate sadness: if thou be afflicted, seek not a remedy in creatures. Wait for the Lord, and He will make haste to help thee.

2. *And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.* Luke xxiv. 14, 15.

The sheep were straying; the Shepherd in His charity cometh to their rescue that they perish not. But He cometh as it were disguised, that He may first dispose them to receive a heavenly consolation. His

will is that we should be prepared before we receive a grace. As they commune of the Passion, He is in their midst : behold His joy that we should have His death in recollection ! Let thy talk be ever of Divine things and not of vanities : so shalt thou have Jesus for a companion in thy way.

3. *But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.* Luke xxiv. 16.

Such was the exterior token of their inward mind. Blinded by lack of faith they knew Him not with the eye of flesh. Wherefore were their eyes thus holden ? Peradventure through excess of sadness such as oft-times confoundeth the mind. God is ever present to aid the afflicted ; yet when affliction toucheth us we think Him absent. Then must we stablish the heart by faith. God is wise, and knoweth our sorrow ; almighty, and can relieve it ; good, and willeth to succour us. Wait for Him then, and play the man : so shall He comfort thy heart.

MONDAY

CHRIST DEMANDETH WHAT BE THEIR COMMUNICATIONS.

1. *(Jesus) said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them . . . answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?* Luke xxiv. 17, 18.

He asketh of that which He well knew : wherefore ? (1) *That they might lay bare their sores* (saith Theophylact) *and receive a remedy.* Behold the kindness of Christ ! (2) He rejoiceth to have His passion brought to mind ; therefore He affordeth an occasion for the telling of it. Do thou in thankfulness tell out to God the story of His bitter sufferings

for thy sake. What manner of communications are thine? Surely they are ever of that which lieth nearest to thy heart. Consider then what manner they be, Divine, or human? In fine, see that thou hide not the sore places of thy soul : so mayest thou be granted the healing ointment that they need.

2. *And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth.* . . . Luke xxiv. 19.

(1) He asketh, either feigning that He knoweth not, or as though forgetful already of the supreme wrongs He suffered. Canst thou thus forget thy petty injuries? (2) He asketh *What things?* as though all His passion were a matter so small that it had gone from His memory. His great love for thee maketh all He did for thee seem small. Small then must be my love for Jesus when I imagine that it is much that I have done for Him. Now will I strive to do more : yet still shall I be an unprofitable servant.

3. *We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.* Luke xxiv. 21.

They lay bare their sore of little faith. They believed not that it was that very death of Christ which should redeem the world. If then thou canst not discern the counsel of God in the course of human events, trouble not thyself therein. His decree is ever best ; and He achieveth His end by means that we should judge clean contrary thereto.

TUESDAY

CHRIST REBUKETH THE TWO DISCIPLES FOR THEIR
UNBELIEF.

1. *Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe.* Luke xxiv. 25.

A sharp rebuke indeed, yet with no manner of

indignation. *Fools* He calleth them, not as railing on them, but as fulfilling the demand of charity. If thou must blame, blame thus: if thou be blamed, receive it thus. Thy life sheweth that thou too art slow of heart to believe the sufferings of Christ. Thou mayest believe with thy mind, but shewest it not by works or following of His example.

2. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?* Luke xxiv. 26.

He allegeth for the cause of His rebuke their little faith in this truth. Do thou then believe it fully. Yea, verily He *ought*; for the necessity of satisfaction, for the benefit of redemption, for the constraint of His love towards us, for an example that we should imitate. Christ ought to have suffered: and wilt thou escape from mortification? And for Him it was that He might *enter into his glory*: shalt thou enter into Another's glory without a cross?

3. *And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.* Luke xxiv. 27.

Note well the means whereby He made His way into their hearts: (1) By kindly address; (2) by rebuke; (3) by instruction. These be the means for thee to use with the hard of heart. Hearken thou to the interpretations of the great Teacher. Compare His actions with His doctrine: and so do thou confirm thy doctrine by thine actions.

WEDNESDAY

CHRIST MAKETH AS THOUGH HE WOULD GO FURTHER,
AND RECEIVETH THE INVITATION OF THE DISCIPLES.

1. *And they drew near unto the village whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.* Luke xxiv. 28.

It was His determination to abide with them, yet maketh He as though He would depart, *not*, saith S. Bernard, *that such was His desire, but that He would hear them say, Abide with us, O Lord.* (1) God willeth to bestow on thee His graces: but likewise He willeth that thou implore them with a longing heart. If thou longest but feebly or longest not at all, thou must not murmur that He leaveth thee impoverished. (2) God maketh as though He would leave thee; yet in truth He goeth not away: *I am with him in trouble* (Psalm xci. 15).

2. *But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us, O Lord: for it is toward evening.* Luke xxiv. 29.

They know Him not, yet beg His company: thou knowest Him, yet givest no hearty invitation; nay, it may even be that thou affordest many a reason why He should depart. A holy longing may in some sort do violence to God Himself: with such longing they constrain Him to come in. They add the plea that *it is toward evening*. Nay rather for them it was towards daybreak, now that the true exposition of the Scripture enlightened their minds. But with thee it is toward evening indeed, inasmuch as thou dividest this very day with the night. Do violence to thyself, and thus constrain the Lord to abide with thee this day, as though it were thy last.

3. *And he went in to tarry with them.* Luke xxiv. 29.

What happiness was it to have the Lord for their guest! Think with what honour they received Him, though as yet they knew Him not. Poor the fare, but lavish the affection. Shall we not believe that they assigned Him the chief place and did Him careful service? Who is it that taketh that chief place in thine own estimation, and thy love? God, or thyself?

THURSDAY

CHRIST IS KNOWN IN BREAKING OF BREAD.

1. *He took bread . . . and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him. Luke xxiv. 30, 31.*

'Tis thought by S. Austin and S. Chrysostom that Christ did consecrate that bread or ever He gave it, and thus was known of them. Such in truth is an effect of the most Holy Eucharist that it illuminateth the mind to perceive heavenly things. How cometh it then that, thou so frequent a receiver of the same, art yet so deaf to the voice of God, so alive to the clamour of thy senses? Effect would follow cause if thou didst place no hindrance. Away then with all such hindrances!

2. *And he vanished out of their sight. Luke xxiv. 31.*

Christ tarried not to receive what ever followeth the recognition of Himself, adoration, thanksgiving, service. He sheweth Himself and straightway vanisheth. Learn then that in this life even Divine consolations quickly pass: nay, God Himself maketh them to vanish, that He may train thee in patience, humility, and long-suffering. It profiteth not that they should abide.

3. *And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way? Luke xxiv. 32.*

The words of Christ, saith Origen, inflamed their hearts with Divine love. Thou readest holy books, meditatest on the teachings of Christ, listenest to exhortations: God speaketh unto thee; He will inflame thee, if thou resist Him not. But when was it that, they say, the fire kindled upon them? Not in the breaking of bread, when they knew Him: but by

the way, when they knew Him not. When God hideth Himself from thee, let thy desolation do thee service, inflaming thy heart with love and longing and a frame that cleaveth unto God.

FRIDAY

HE APPEARETH UNTO THE ASSEMBLED DISCIPLES.

1. *At evening . . . when the doors were shut where the disciples were gathered together . . . came Jesus.* John xx. 19.

(1) When there is no due disposition of the heart, God tarrieth. As yet they believed not: therefore He had sent them divers tidings of the Resurrection, to dispose their hearts and inflame their desire for Him. At late evening came He, since so late were they disposed to meet Him. If thou desirest the visitation of God, thou must dispose thyself thereto. (2) *When the doors were shut.* God entereth not into the heart unless the doors of the senses are fast closed. If the senses be not straitly kept, and love of created things wandereth in and out, the spirit suffereth dissipation. Look well to the doors of thy heart.

2. *Came Jesus and stood in the midst.* John xx. 19.

That all alike might see Him well, the Leader, Master, Shepherd, and Protector of His own. Where two or three are gathered together in His name, there is He. Therefore in thy prayer gather together the powers of thy soul, close the doors of thy senses, and soon will He be with thee, to lead thee on to brave resolves, to teach thee firm based truths, to feed thee with consolations, to protect thee against thy foes. He loveth to be in the midst: do thou then enthrone Him in the midst of thy heart, that thou mayest treasure, love, and fear Him more than all.

3. *And saith unto them, Peace be unto you. It is I; be not afraid.* John xx. 19, Luke xxiv. 36 (Vulgate).

Each word brings its own consolation. *Peace be unto you*: that peace which He had sometime promised, which now by His passion He hath gained. He is the God of peace. Be thou then at peace with God by conforming of thy will to His; at peace with thy neighbour by charity which suffereth long and is kind, is not puffed up, and so forth; at peace with thyself by mortification of thy evil affections. *It is I*: I. as S. Chrysostom expoundeth, *who have called you by grace, have elected you in mercy, have born with you with fatherly care, have sustained you with charity, and now take you to myself in mere loving-kindness.* Say thou to my soul, even mine, *It is I*: and though an host of men were laid against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid (Psalm xxvii. 3).

SATURDAY

TO THE DISCIPLES, TERRIFIED AND AFFRIGHTED HE SHEWETH THE SCARS OF HIS WOUNDS.

1. *But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.* Luke xxiv. 37.

Being yet but rough and imperfect disciples, saith S. Bede, they believe not that He could have risen on the third day. They suppose therefore that they see a spirit or phantom; yea though but now they have heard His own word, It is I. How often do we not think, or feign ourselves to think, that holy suggestions or truths that we should act upon are mere illusions! But it is we that be our own illusions, for in truth it is fear of difficulty that holdeth us back. Hast not thou aforetime fallen into such a fear? But wilt thou so do hereafter?

2. *And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?* Luke xxiv. 38.

Christ approveth not this fear and trouble at the suddenness of His appearing. Therefore friendlywise He upbraideth them. Sudden adventure trieth the heart whether it be constant and rooted upon God. If thou wouldest have nothing come upon thee so sudden as to lay thee low, accustom thyself to be foreseeing and forearmed. Hadst thou done thus, what glorious victories wouldest thou have won over all those difficulties which have caused thy many shameful falls! But for this thou must expel self-love.

3. *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.* Luke xxiv. 39.

This was to banish their fears and to confirm their faith. Ah, the loving-kindness of Christ! Do thou venerate His holy side, and hands, and feet, all pierced. Hold to this spectacle as long as thou mayest. If thou be affrighted by some difficulty or at the taking on thyself of some grievous task, gaze on those wounds, once painful, but now glorious; and hope that all thy wounds and adversities may likewise turn to glory.

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

CHRIST EATETH WITH THE DISCIPLES.

1. *And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?* Luke xxiv. 41.

See the many ways whereby Jesus winneth His own to the belief that it is He indeed. He sendeth His

messengers: He offereth Himself to sight, and hearing, and touch; and now, albeit clothed with His glorious body, He asketh meat, if thus He may draw them from their unbelief. There is no one method for the saving of a soul: for the healing of thine own thou must try both this and that. If one bring no profit, do not on that account lose heart. Do thou maintain thy zeal for others' salvation and thine own: so will it be effectual and bring new methods to thy mind.

2. *And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.* Luke xxiv. 42.

Such was all that their slender store provided. They gave the best they had. If Jesus asketh thee for meat, what wilt thou offer Him? Give Him the best thou hast—thyself: yet first thou must pass through the fire of mortification, interior and exterior alike. Without this thou canst not be pleasing unto God. But add to thy gift the honey of a will made ready to obey and of a pure intention. Such seasoning thy works require or ever God will savour them.

3. *Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.* John xx. 20.

They had seen Him indeed at His first entering in: but their joy arose not until after much converse with Him. Joy cometh with full belief; or peradventure from experience of His gentleness in that He bringeth not up against them their shameful desertion of Himself. His loving-kindness stirreth up within them the hope of all the blessings He hath promised. How often hast thou forsaken Him, and He hath shewn thee the selfsame loving-kindness! Thou also mayest be glad and hope for further blessings from the kindness of God.

MONDAY

HE OPENETH TO THEM THE MEANING OF THE SCRIPTURES.

1. *These are the words which I spake unto you . . . that all things must be fulfilled, which were written.* Luke xxiv. 44.

He calleth to their minds the memory of His Passion and Death, shewing that these did not happen by chance, but by God's decree. All things that God hath decreed must be fulfilled. They must be fulfilled: therefore oppose not thyself. Would that thou hadst never so done!

2. *Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.* Luke xxiv. 45.

And not that they alone might understand, but that as our teachers they might transmit to us this same understanding. How cometh it that we, with such high teaching, are yet so dull to understand the scriptures and the doctrine of Christ? We are blinded by self-love and inordinate affections. Have not these been the causes of thy blindness even until now?

3. *And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer.* Luke xxiv. 46.

Thus: ponder the word; out of love for men, out of obedience to the Father, for the need of satisfaction. *It behoved Me to suffer*, because it had been so decreed, because I had chosen and taken on Myself this burden. What is thy mind herein? Wilt thou make satisfaction for thy sins? It behoveth thee to suffer. Lovest thou man's salvation? It behoveth thee to suffer. Wilt thou shew thyself obedient to the Father? It behoveth thee to suffer.

TUESDAY

HE GIVETH THEM THE HOLY GHOST AND THE POWER
TO ABSOLVE FROM SIN.

1. *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.* John xx. 21.

Thus He maketh them His apostles and ambassadors. As His Father hath sent Him, for the selfsame end of man's salvation, so sendeth He them: and He would have them labour therein with love like unto His own, yea, even to the shedding of their blood. How great is thy vocation to be fellow-labourer with the Son of God for the salvation of human souls! Truly it needeth zeal like the zeal of Christ: how lacking art thou found herein! and it calleth thee through such zeal to suffer more. Is not God, nay, is not one single soul, worth such a price?

2. *And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* John xx. 22.

He breathed on them: that they might know that as one breath of God gave unto Adam both life and natural strength, so life and supernatural strength are given us by the Holy Ghost. Hast thou this spiritual life? Without doubt it was His will to bestow it as often as He filled thy mind with holy inspirations. If thou wilt act accordingly, how shalt thou increase in spiritual stature!

3. *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them.* John xx. 23.

Behold the love of Christ for man! God is offended by us, and giveth unto men the power of reconciliation. How readily He giveth pardon! After His passion He might have forsaken them that

sought His aid : instead thereof He provideth shipwrecked mariners with their second plank. Great was the blessing herein bestowed upon the Church : if thou seest thyself tied with chains of sin, thus with full hope of pardon use this remedy.

WEDNESDAY

THE UNBELIEF OF THOMAS THE APOSTLE.

1. *Thomas, one of the twelve . . . was not with them when Jesus came.* John xx. 24.

He had heard the disciples returning from Emmaus and telling how they had seen Christ : he believed them not, and therefore left the company. Thus it came about that he missed the consolation of Christ's presence. He was guilty of two faults : he preferred his own opinion to the assertions of the brethren ; and he deserted the common life. Beware thou of such offences. Private judgment is the high road unto error. The presence of Christ goeth with loving fellowship : He withdraweth from them that break the bonds of charity and walk as seemeth them good. Consider thine own condition under these two heads.

2. *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord.* John xx. 25.

Yet Thomas, who before would not believe the two disciples, still clinging to his own opinion, now refuseth credence to the whole company, yea, peradventure to the most Blessed Virgin herself. So, when we begin an evil course, we run from bad to worse. Beware the first beginnings of evil : dig up the roots thereof. Wouldest thou hadst done this long ago !

3. *But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.* John xx. 25.

So he protesteth, to maintain his own opinion still. See the great sins he now committeth: obstinate unbelief; pride in preferring his opinion to that of all the rest; presumption in dictating to God the manner of his own conversion. To such a depth fell an Apostle: how great so ever thou be, yet stand in fear, and humbly submit thine own judgment to authority.

THURSDAY

CHRIST APPEARETH TO THE DISCIPLES IN THE PRESENCE OF THOMAS.

1. *After eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut.* John xx. 26.

(1) Thomas remained in unbelief eight days: doubtless he would have persisted yet longer, if Christ had not come to meet him. So possible is it to fall and to persevere in sin; so impossible to rise except by the mercy of God. How often hast thou known it! What love must thou render to this His goodness!

(2) He sought but one, but sought him in their full assembly: that he who had sinned before all might also before all be restored that so the general sorrow might be changed to universal joy. When thou hast set a bad example, in that same matter and to those same persons, thou art bound unto the contrary.

2. *Came Jesus, the doors being shut.* John xx. 26.

The matter was the grave fault of Thomas, and the rebuke which must be inflicted. Jesus would not

have such business transacted with open doors. The good father chideth his son in the secret places of his dwelling, that his good name suffer no hurt. Thou too must be careful for thy neighbour's name : open not ever the door of thy lips to do him hurt.

3. *Stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.*
John xx. 26.

As who should say, There is peace where I am in the midst, and nowhere else. Thou, Thomas, wast not with thy brethren when I was in their midst : therefore thou hast no peace. Learn that thou likewise mayest not look for peace, unless Jesus be in the midst, and He alone the centre of all thine actions. Make not then thine own self the centre of thine actions.

FRIDAY

WHAT CHRIST SAID TO THOMAS, AND THOMAS TO CHRIST.

1. *Then saith he to Thomas.* John xx. 27.

Wherefore doth He turn Him to this one alone? There be present others more worthy of regard, Peter, and John, and, as we believe, the Blessed Virgin herself. Yet He directeth His words to Thomas only, to shew that for his sake He hath come again. He looketh not to the merit of the many, but to the necessity of this one. Behold the kindness and the love of God! Bethink thee how thou wouldest have turned thy back on him who had of late offended thee; and learn to use words of kindness unto such an one. This is the mark of the sons of God.

2. *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands.*
... John xx. 27.

(1) So He displayeth that Divinity in the power of

which He heard the words of Thomas refusing to believe. Had Thomas but called it to mind, he would have pondered those words with greater care. And thou, if thy words and actions lack due care, seek the remedy in remembrance of the presence of God. (2) He deigneth to accept all Thomas's conditions: yet addeth this admonition: *And be not faithless*. Treat the offender gently, yet spare not the rebuke whereby he may be edified.

3. *Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.* John xx. 28.

Few be the words, yet spring they from the depth of the heart. Sorrow and love forbade more speaking; sorrow for his fault, love for the graciousness which left no room for the indignation he had merited. *Lord*, to be feared, and *God*, to be loved: so he addresseth Him. Thou for thy part art ready to acknowledge Christ as thy Lord and thy God, yet behavest not thyself accordingly. If He be Lord, why fearest thou not to offend Him? If He be God, why lovest thou Him not more than all?

SATURDAY

HE APPEARETH TO THE DISCIPLES AT THE SEA OF
TIBERIAS.

1. *Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee.* John xxi. 3.

See the wondrous unity of heart that springeth from charity. One sheweth his pleasure, and all consent thereto. Dispel not thou such charitable concord, if only the act proposed be lawful and honest. See too the wondrous power of example, and specially of a superior's example. His subjects rush to follow it. If then thou be a subject, thou hast

thine elders' example to emulate: if thou be a superior, thou hast one to set.

2. *And they entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.* John xxi. 3.

It was God who caused that they should catch nothing that night, to teach them that without Jesus all their labour was in vain; and that in the night of sin, or evil intention, or presumption, toil is useless. So then, if thou wouldest enjoy the fruit of thy toil, walk in the light of grace, and unite thyself to God, by thought, and affection, and intention, and prayer.

3. *But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.* John xxi. 4, 5.

As long as we be in this life we are at sea and in the dark. They that go a fishing for honours, delights and vanities will at the last confess with sorrow that they have taken nothing. Do thou then labour in such wise that when one day God asketh, *Hast thou any meat?* thou mayest be able to answer, Yea, by thy grace I have taken this or that. Christ asketh His question not to inform Himself, but to cause them to note straightway how vain is toil without Him, but how fruitful with His aid. Without Thee, O Lord, I can do nothing.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

CHRIST REVEALETH HIMSELF TO THE DISCIPLES.

1. *He said unto them, Cast the net on the right right of the ship. . . . They cast . . . and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.* John xxi. 6.

It was the Lord that bade them, though the

disciples knew Him not. The ample draught rewarded their prompt obedience. Be sure the Lord will bless all that thou doest for obedience. He gathered the fishes together on the right side in readiness for the disciples when they should obey His word. It was not the fishers' craft that met success, but the Lord's steadfast care that made provision. Put thy trust in the Lord and not in thyself. He bade them cast on the right side, to teach thee that thou must toil with a holy and not a sinister intent. So labouring thou wilt never lose thy reward.

2. *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord.* John xxi. 7.

(1) Why is John first to see the Lord? Hear S. Hierome: *Jesus stood on the shore, and the Apostles knew not whom they saw. None but the virgin Apostle knew the Virgin Lord.* Purity of heart is thy chief need if thou wouldest know God and the things of God. *Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.* (2) Hear also S. Chrysostom: *He that is loved is first to see, for love ever quickeneth the eyes of the beloved.* Render therefore thyself worthy of God's love for thee by thine for Him: so will He love thee, and will manifest Himself to thee. (3) John maketh known to Peter that it is the Lord. Put away envy, and make known to others what God hath shewn to thee.

3. *Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him . . . and did cast himself into the sea.* John xxi. 7.

Not content with having seen, saith S. Hierome, impatient with fervent desire, he maketh naught of the draught, and heedeth not the danger: when he beholdeth the Lord on the shore he cannot tarry for his shipmates. So is it ever with fervour: it beareth not with delay, it feareth not dangers. Contrast thine own lukewarmness. How slow and scant thy

toil, for all thy knowledge of holy things! Away with tarrying and all entanglements! Peter was not drowned: nor needest thou fear to break thyself.

MONDAY

CHRIST ON THE SHORE PREPARETH FOOD AND BIDDETH
THE DISCIPLES.

1. *As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.* John xxi. 9.

(1) While they fish, Christ maketh ready their food. Though now endowed with His glorious Body He despiseth not the lowly service. And wilt thou in thy mortal flesh disdain a humble duty? (2) The Apostles knew not whence were the broiled fishes (for they were many), the loaves, the ordered repast. Christ would shew that it was His part to provide it all, and that their great draught of fishes likewise was a gift from Him. Own God then as the Giver of any good thing thou hast. Render it back to Him, and use it for His glory.

2. *Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.* John xxi. 10.

Peter immediately drew to land one hundred and fifty and three great fishes. It was the will of Christ that the number and the greatness of the fishes caught at one draught after the fruitless labour of the night should teach them that they owed all to His loving-kindness, and move them to more earnest love of Him. Mark then how thou shouldest be moved to love Him by all the benefits He hath done unto thee, and use them to His glory.

3. *Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine.* John xxi. 12.

Behold the courtesy and familiarity of Christ, who inviteth them to dine and shareth with them the meal. Such goodness demandeth thy love. The Lord made ready the food, as saith Euthymius, *that He might of His loving-kindness refresh them therewith after toil.* Do thou likewise fish with diligence for the souls that swim in the sea of the world; and have confidence that on the shore of thy true fatherland the Lord will invite thee *that thou mayest eat and drink at His table in His kingdom* (Luke xxii. 30).

TUESDAY

CHRIST COMMITTETH HIS SHEEP UNTO PETER.

1. *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.* John xxi. 15.

Peter is the predestined Shepherd of the sheep. He therefore must look for plenteous toil, which only love could bear. Wherefore saith S. Austin, *He asketh of his love, He demandeth his labour.* In the sight of Christ he that loveth most is the greatest. Such is the greatness thou must strive after, holding all other in contempt. Peter, who hath learned to put no trust in himself, answereth *Thou knowest*; but mindful of the confusion of his own presumption will not add, *More than these.* Prefer not thyself to others. Thy fervour will depart and thy presumption be put to confusion.

2. *He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? . . .* John xxi. 16.

He repeateth the question as demanding persevering love in the Shepherd of souls. Nor without

this wilt thou guide thine own soul aright. Happy Peter, who could answer *I love thee!* Unhappy I, who should say, "I love myself, and my own convenience, and the created world; yea, though sometimes I do love Thee, how soon I fail and grow lukewarm!" Henceforth that must not be.

3. *He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* John xxi. 17.

Wherefore asketh He the third time? *Lest the Apostles should treat with severity and scorn one that had denied Christ.* So saith Optatus of Milevium. Thus He taketh thought for apostolical authority. Or, as saith S. Ambrose, *He had thrice denied Him, therefore he must thrice confess Him.* And thou, as often as thou hast sinned, hast likewise denied Christ: hast thou so many times confessed Him by hearty acts of faith and love? Habituate thyself to frequent acts of faith, which are the root of all good. *Peter was grieved,* because He asked him thrice. Either the grievous memory of his former sin came back again; or else there sprang up within him the fear of his own weakness, even though then he knew nothing against himself. Do thou also stand in fear: thou art not hereby justified for that thou knowest nothing against thyself.

WEDNESDAY

CHRIST FORETELLETH PETER'S MARTYRDOM.

1. *When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.* John xxi. 18.

After this third questioning of his love Peter was

afraid that as he had denied Him after protesting his readiness to die, so he might fall again after protesting his love. Christ therefore assured him that for love he would indeed stretch forth his hands upon the cross. I cannot be sure that another will crucify me for the love of Jesus: yet will I *crucify the flesh with the lusts*. But if from others there cometh some affliction, then will I *stretch forth my hands* to welcome it.

2. *And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth another disciple.* John xxi. 19, 20.

(1) He hath foretold the cross for Peter: now he sheweth him how to bear it; *Follow me*; let My example be before thine eyes. This is the cause why we fall beneath the cross, because we look not unto Jesus. I will *look therefore unto Jesus the author and finisher*. (2) Peter is called: John likewise followeth. He that loveth tarrieth not for precepts, but of his own will followeth Jesus. How cometh it that thou art so slow to follow, but that thy love is lukewarm?

3. *Peter seeing him (John) saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.* John xxi. 21, 22.

Peter's curiosity suffereth rebuke: and how much more doth thine deserve it? Thou searchest into other men's matters at home and abroad: *what is that to thee?* Thou notest all their dealings, the companions they choose, the time they spend with them: *what is that to thee?* It is thy part to follow Jesus: attend to that alone; leave all else to God.

THURSDAY

CHRIST APPEARETH TO MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED
DISCIPLES ON A MOUNTAIN IN GALILEE.

1. *Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain.* Matthew xxviii. 16.

(1) Paul recordeth (1 Corinthians xv. 6) that there were more than five hundred disciples there present. These were animated, methinks, by the words of the women and others who told how Christ had promised to be seen in Galilee. Christ restrained not His love to the few; nay, He extended it to all. Reserve not thine own affection for thy chosen friend, but communicate the same to all men: make thyself the servant of all. (2) The Apostles had seen Christ, and they passed the word to others, that they too might enjoy that special blessing. Communicate to others, without envying, that thou hast received. (3) Consider their affections and their longings as they awaited the Lord.

2. *Where Jesus had appointed them.* Matthew xxviii. 16.

Jesus, that He may faithfully fulfil His promise, observeth the place and time appointed for His appearance. How faithful in His promises is God, but thou how little faithful unto Him! How great are thy promises, and how poor the performance of the name! How unfaithful is the world, and how diligent thy service thereunto!

3. *And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.* Matthew xxviii. 17.

Some, that is to say, of those who had not already seen Him, though they had heard from others all that had come to pass. So cold is our heart to the inspirations of God. Ah Lord! take from me this heart of stone. In the beginning some were doubtful:

but in the end all worshipped; with what reverence and humility and love and joy! Climb thou the mountain-slope of holiness: so shalt thou merit the like consolation.

FRIDAY

HE APPOINTETH HIS DISCIPLES FOR THE CONVERSION OF
THE WORLD.

1. *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* Matthew xxviii. 18.

That power which He had by inheritance as God's own Son, in virtue of the hypostatic union, is given Him, He averreth, by His cross and the merits of His Passion. Mark well the virtue of true mortification, whereby there is given unto thee power in heaven, or thy rational soul, and in earth, or thy animal life wherein are situate thy base affections. Own Christ as Lord of all power: adore Him; and to that power submit thyself. Beseech Him to wield the same through thy superiors, as best conduceth to His glory.

2. *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.* Matthew xxviii. 19.

(1) Ponder that word *Therefore*. Because all power is given unto me, therefore do ye teach. How followeth this from that? He sheweth that He joineth unto His supreme power a right good will, and that He useth that power only to bless. Many a time hast thou had knowledge of His goodness: set then thy love upon it. (2) *Teach all*. Yea, He thought even upon thee: none was shut out. And thou, if thou be a teacher, *teach all*: despise not the poor. Be nigh at hand to the miserable as to the happy: nay, to them chiefly, for it is of them that

thou art taught. Whatsoever *ye have done . . . unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me* (Matthew xxv. 40).

3. *Baptizing them in the name of the Father. . . .* Matthew xxviii. 19.

The harsh law of circumcision for a remedy against original sin is abrogated, and the gentler law of Baptism taketh its place. Render thanks to God that by the Gospel law He hath made the yoke easy and the burden light. Thou also hast received the benefit of Baptism, which is lacking to the multitudes of the heathen. What owest thou unto the Lord? Thou hast been made of the household of Christ—a Christian. But a fair name is but a disgrace unless thine actions answer thereto. Thou must live then as becometh thine estate, as becometh the son of thy great Father.

SATURDAY

THE CONTINUATION OF CHRIST'S INSTRUCTION TO THE APOSTLES.

1. *Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.* Matthew xxviii. 20.

Hear S. Hierome: *He bade them first to teach, then to cleanse by the Sacrament of the Faith, and finally to impose the observance of His own commands. To observe*, said He: not to know: the object of the Divine Law is that it be observed. *All things*: not *some things*. He that offendeth *in one point is guilty of all*. Observe therefore the commandments of the Lord: on this dependeth thy salvation. *And his commandments are not grievous* (1 John v. 3). He that loveth thee, the same hath laid them on thee.

2. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.* Mark xvi. 16.

Recollect what it is to be damned, and what to be saved, and that each dependeth now on thine own will. Wilt thou be saved? Thou needest but faith and Baptism. But this faith must not be that faith without works which is dead; but a living faith proved by good works. Thank God for Baptism and faith: but mark well how thou approvest thy faith by thy works. Pity and pray for *them that sit in darkness.*

3. *And these signs shall follow them that believe.* Mark xvi. 17.

He foretelleth that the faith will be approved by miracles, as afterwards came to pass. All these works may be done of thee spiritually. (1) They cast out devils, as saith S. Bernard, *whenever sins be rooted from the heart.* (2) They speak with new tongues, he saith, *when their former way of speech departeth out of their mouth.* (3) They take up serpents, he saith again, *when they quench the fiery darts of evil suggestion.* (4) They drink without hurt a deadly thing, *when they experience temptation but consent not thereto.* (5) They lay hands on the sick, and they recover, *when they cover ill affections with good works.*

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

HE PROMISETH TO BE WITH US EVEN UNTO THE END OF
THE WORLD.

1. *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.* Matthew xxviii. 20.

He sent His disciples forth as sheep among wolves.

Great were the trials that awaited them. Behold the consolation: *I am with you*. Be this thy consolation also: *Be not afraid . . . for I am with thee* (Jeremiah i. 8). *Yet not so that thou shouldest have nothing to suffer, but, a greater boon, that thou shouldest not be overcome by the rage of them that oppress thee.*

2. *I am with you.* Matthew xxviii. 20.

As God, and as God made Man. As God, in virtue of His Incomprehensibility. Unseen I see you and observe your doings. Thus are we spurred to well doing. Think on the eye of the Lord ever upon thee, and fervour will be thine. As God made Man, in virtue of His presence in the Church. Ponder this blessing, and receive it with all love.

3. *I am with you.* Matthew xxviii. 20.

(1) By habitual grace, which joineth us to God. With what care should I treasure this bond! (2) By actual graces, whereby He imparteth strength for supernatural activity. But it is mine to choose whether these be effectual or no. How different should I now be, had I but always welcomed them! (3) By His special providence, whereby He directeth each man to the fulfilment of his own vocation. In all these ways, Lord, Thou art with me: and I resolve ever in heart and deed to be with Thee.

MONDAY

HE APPEARETH TO THEM FOR THE LAST TIME AS THEY
SIT AT MEAT IN THE UPPER ROOM.

1. *Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat and upbraided them with their unbelief.* Mark xvi. 14.

Gaze thou on Christ's human form. Endowed with

His glorious body and even now preparing to ascend, yet He disdaineth not to sit at meat with the disciples. However honourable be thine estate, make thyself equal unto all. It was for love that He upbraided them, willing to purify His own ever more and more. And now no man excuseth himself. When wilt thou thus accept correction and set it down to love?

2. *I go my way to him that sent me.* John xvi. 5.

We have no record of any more that now He said : yet may we believe that He shewed them that the time was at hand when He should go His way to the Father, and that He spake again some of the words uttered aforetime at the Last Supper. Consider the grief with which they learned that henceforth they must lack the presence of Christ. Thou hast more cause for grief if thou lack the presence of His grace : that were a loss more ruinous to thy soul. Seek not for sensible devotion ; that should be left to God's disposal ; but relax not the true and firm devotion of thy will.

3. *I go my way to him.* John xvi. 5.

Christ would not cast down the hearts of His disciples by sudden announcement of His departure. Rather He disposed them gradually to accept it, vouchsafing the presence of His glorified flesh but rarely and for short periods. It is harder to bear separation from the friends whose presence and familiarity we often enjoy. Behold the means whereby thou mayest detach thyself from creatures and thine own convenience. Make sparing use of them at first as thou passest on thy way : afterwards thou shalt miss them less sorely.

TUESDAY

CHRIST CONSOLETH HIS APOSTLES, AS HE MAKETH
READY TO DEPART.

1. *It is expedient for you that I go away.* John xvi. 7.

We may believe that Christ spake again to the grieving Apostles these words also. He saith not, *It is expedient for me*: although indeed it was right well expedient that after His Passion He should enjoy His glory and sit on the right hand of the Father: but *It is expedient for you*; that they might know that both in His passible and in His glorified flesh His mind had been set on them, not on Himself, and that even now all His activity was on their behalf. And shouldest not thou refuse to make thyself the centre of thine actions? If He doeth all for thee, shouldest not thou do all for God.

2. *For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.* John xvi. 7.

The Apostles yet loved Christ with carnal love: and therein they loved themselves. It was expedient that what was of the earthly senses should be all converted into spirit, and that their faith and hope and love should be made perfect. Christ will be loved with charity that is thus pure and spiritual: how can thy many disordered affections fail to hinder this? *The occupied mind*, saith S. Bernard, *receiveth not the fulness of spiritual grace*.

3. *But if I depart, I will send him unto you.* John xvi. 7.

The coming of the Holy Ghost depended on Christ's ascension into heaven: for thus it was decreed by God that the one consolation which was still in the flesh should be taken away, and the other which was all of the spirit should take its place. And

we may believe that God's ordering is still the same, that a man may not enjoy the taste of heavenly and spiritual things unless he detach himself from earthly and carnal things. Look well and see where lieth thine entanglement, in what earthly and carnal affections. There thou hast the cause of thy little savour of what is spiritual. Rid thyself of them, and that savour will be thine.

WEDNESDAY

HE LEADETH HIS DISCIPLES OUT UNTO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

1. *Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.* Luke xxiv. 49.

Ponder His words, lay hold on their mystic meaning : see what preparation thou must make for the promised coming of the Holy Ghost. (1) He biddeth them *tarry*, in repose, and chiefly He looketh unto repose of mind untroubled by created things or passions of its own. (2) *In the city*; for the mind must keep its quiet even in the busy mart. (3) *Until*: He giveth no token of the time, willing to inflame their longing desire, and lead them to passive surrender unto God's disposal. (4) *Ye be endued with power*: that we may know that without the Holy Ghost we are both naked and powerless: all our power cometh from Him. To-day in this same power stand fast against thine enemies.

2. *And he led them out as far as to Bethany.* Luke xxiv. 50.

We may believe that He went to Bethany to bid farewell to Martha and Mary and lead them also to witness His triumph. Mark how well He loved them. But they had merited His love; the one by the hospitality she shewed Him, the other by the way of

contemplation. How mindful is God of any duty that thou payest Him! how unmindful thou of the graces thou receivest!

3. *To the mount called Olivet.* Acts i. 12.

(1) Consider the affections of the Apostles as they went with Christ, part of sorrow, part of joy; their tears as they said Farewell; their supplications. (2) He approached the Mount of Olivet, from whence He would ascend to heaven. Remember how there He entered on His Passion; and know that glory is founded on adversity. Thou shalt not therefore go to glory by the way of worldly delight and the pleasure of the senses. Say with S. Theresa, *To suffer or else to die.*

THURSDAY

OF THE LORD'S ASCENSION.

1. *He lifted up his hands and blessed them.* Luke xxiv. 50.

We cannot know what were these words of blessing, but we may think they were such as He had spoken at the Supper: *Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are* (John xvii. 11). But Christ's blessing is ever effectual, bestowing those graces that it prayeth for. *Bless me, even me also, O my Father*, with blessings of heaven, not with those of earth, which neither satisfy nor keep their savour.

2. *While they beheld, he was taken up.* Acts i. 9.

But they not only beheld, but, as men that gazed upon a spectacle of glory and loveliness unheard of, followed His going from them with wonder, joy, and longing. Can we not hear them cry, one and all: *Draw me, we will run after thee* (Song of Solomon

i. 4). Do thou follow Him with the like affection. *He was taken up*, not vanishing suddenly, that so their affections might have opportunity to dwell on His departing. Sudden affections grow not roots. When in thy meditation thou hast caused good affections to spring up, thou must foster them that day at the least, and let them grow.

3. *He humbled himself . . . wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.* Philippians ii. 8, 9.

When thou lowerest thyself, then thou beginnest to ascend to heaven. *Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended?* (Ephesians iv. 9). Such was Christ's promise to humility. *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (Luke xiv. 11). The deeper thy humility, the higher thine ascension. But if continuest on the way that now thou goest, canst thou promise heaven unto thyself? Look unto the ways of the Lord, and follow therein.

FRIDAY

TWO ANGELS STAND BY AND FORETELL CHRIST'S SECOND COMING.

1. *And a cloud received him out of their sight.* Acts i. 9.

The delight of their eyes, the sole cause of their joy, hidden by the rolling cloud, was suddenly taken from their sight. This cloud, we may believe, was no mere vapour attracted to the place, but God's own especial creation. Even so sometimes it is God Himself who sets a cloud over our intelligence, so that we may not penetrate into the Divine mysteries. Herein He would either hinder us from letting go of duties of charity towards our neighbours through intentness of contemplation, or else enable us to be better pleasing to Himself through humble acceptance of desolation. But take heed that there be in thee no

other clouds or vapours of thy passions and evil affections, which destroy the vision of God. Come, Thou true Wind of Heaven, and scatter all such clouds as these.

2. *And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them . . . ; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? Acts i. 10, 11.*

The disciples, after that Jesus is hidden from their eyes, receive rebuke : (1) For that they *stand*. While we are in this life, we are still in the way : therefore we must not stand, but go on from strength to strength. (2) For that they *gaze up into heaven*. We shall not attain thereunto by gazing or longing : for that kingdom we must labour, forasmuch as it *suffereth violence*. But thou peradventure seldom gazest up into heaven and all too little meritest such a rebuke. Henceforward then *mine eyes shall be ever looking unto the Lord*. Psalm xxv. 14.

3. *This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come. Acts i. 11.*

They bid them remember His second coming for judgment. *Shall so come* : in like majesty, but not with like intent ; for now He goeth into heaven to be our Advocate ; then He will come to be our Judge. Therefore now that He is parted from us they would have us ever remember this His coming again, that we may fear to offend Him whom we shall have for our Judge. Do thou then in such wise follow His Ascension that thou mayest have no cause to dread His judgment.

SATURDAY

OF CHRIST'S TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION INTO HEAVEN.

1. *When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive. Ephesians iv. 8.*

The holy souls of the patriarchs, led captive in bonds of love, ascend with the ascending Christ and do honour to His triumph. The memory of their late straitened estate abideth with them and they rejoice in their present liberation. Join thyself to their company. Behold how amiable are the dwellings of the Lord of Hosts, and earth will be of no account. O thou fast bound in the soft chains of thine own lusts, aspire unto the liberty of the children of God. Learn too that an apostolic man must not ascend into heaven in solitude without companionship, but bring with him the prey of captives snatched from hell.

2. *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.* Psalm lxxviii. 17.

The angels come forth to meet Him in His triumph. They joy with the Victor for the conquering of hell; with the Shepherd for the finding of the sheep that was lost; with the Father of all men for the restoring of the prodigal son. Unite thyself to them as they rejoice with Christ; but remember the costliness of this His triumph. Own that thou art one of one of the number that be snatched from hell; that thou art that very sheep that had strayed into the wilderness of thy lusts; that thou art that prodigal son that had wasted all his substance. Rejoice, give thanks, resolve thyself.

3. *God is gone up with a merry noise.* Psalm xlvii. 5.

Consider what were those voices of merriment: the words of the holy souls, the sweetest sound in the ear of the Triumphant King, *Thou hast redeemed us, O Lord God, by thy blood . . .* (Revelation v. 9); the song of the angels: *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive His crown . . .* (Revelation v. 12). Do thou with either company bring thy plaudits unto Christ. With the souls own thyself redeemed by His

Blood, and mark the nobility which is thine therefrom, lest thou prove degenerate. From the angels learn that the crown is to Him that is slain, that thou also mayest slay the old man in thyself.

THE SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION

CHRIST'S TRIUMPHANT ENTRY INTO HEAVEN.

1. *Father . . . I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me. . . .* John xvii. 4, 5.

With such words as these thou mayest suppose that Christ entered the presence of the Father. There He proffereth the finished work of His obedience, sheweth His wounds, maketh oblation of the souls which are His spoils of victory : thus He claimeth His glory. Now imagine that thou thyself standest in that same presence : canst thou say truly *I have finished the work*? How imperfect is thine obedience ! How little thou endurest for Christ's sake ! How coldly thou regardest thy neighbour's salvation ! Bestir thyself, that when thine hour is come thou mayest thus address thyself to the eternal Father.

2. *The Lord said unto my Lord : sit thou on my right hand.* Psalm cx. 1.

Let faith shew thee the Human Nature of Christ called to the Father's right hand, there to receive the adoration of the angels and the blessed saints ; bidden to *sit*, that we may know its majesty and power, surpassing all creation. Yet He that is thus crowned with glory and honour is thy Brother. He it is that *humbled himself, and became obedient unto death* (Philippians ii. 8). *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him* (Philippians ii. 9), that thou mayest learn that the true path to glory is humility.

3. *He . . . sat on the right hand of God.* Mark xvi. 19.

To issue His commands, and to give judgment. Yet will He command nothing which He hath not first Himself performed. Every commandment is sweetly seasoned with the savour of His own example. He is a sullen servant that refuseth to apply himself to tasks which his master doth not disdain. Alas, how often hast thou so refused! But it is He that will judge the hidden things of the heart. If thou lovest not thy Father, thy Brother, and thy Lord, then fear thy Judge. Thou mayest deceive man: Him thou canst not deceive.

MONDAY

THE FRUITS OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION.

1. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors.* Psalm xxiv. 7, 9.

This is the first fruit, that Christ by His Ascension hath opened the doors of Heaven that through our sin were closed against us, so that if we will we may enter into glory. Consider the lamentations of the patriarchs while they yet remained closed, and their rejoicings when they saw them open. Yea, do thou also rejoice for the benefit the Lord hath done unto thee. How horrible is sin, one act whereof may close them to thee yet again! Turn thee away from it and abhor it altogether, lest when thou knock thou hear *The door is shut* (Matthew xxv. 10).

2. *I go to prepare a place for you.* John xiv. 2.

The second fruit of the Ascension of Christ is that He prepareth a place for us. He that willed that His Passion and Death should be of service to us, willed likewise that His glory should be to our advantage,

that where He, our Head, is, there we, His members, might be also. How good is God who giveth His all to me! Wilt thou also give thine all to God? By evil report and good report, by honour and dishonour? Truly God that merited all for thee meriteth no less than this from thee.

3. *We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* 1 John ii. 1.

Behold the third fruit. Sinning so often, so often turning back to sin, we have an Advocate who maketh intercession for us and sheweth His wounds unto the Father that the sight of them may appease the wrath we justly merit. Render thyself worthy of that intercession and commit thyself wholly thereunto. But take knowledge that He prayeth *not for the world*. Therefore thou must not live by the world's laws, but by His.

TUESDAY

OF OUR OWN ASCENSION.

1. *Going through the vale of misery.* Psalm lxxxiv. 6.

Christ's Ascension bids us also ascend. This we do in divers ways. First we ascend *through the vale of misery*, which is the purgation of the soul. Herein thou must *ride upon the horses* of thine own unbridled lusts. *These will lift us up if we sit on high in the saddle* (thus saith S. Austin). What thou spurnest under foot is the means of thine own elevation. Spurn then the world and thine own self with generous contempt.

2. *They will go from strength to strength.* Psalm lxxxiv. 7.

Our second ascent is through advance in virtue. Hereto no limit is assigned. *Be ye . . . perfect, as your*

Father in heaven: they that have heard this word can never come to the end of the way. Here then is matter for thy daily endeavour, for the seizing of every occasion. Alas, how many thou lettest slip which never will return! Stir thyself to renewing of thy fervour.

3. *Until unto the God of gods appeareth every one of them in Sion.* Psalm lxxxiv. 7.

Our third ascent is by the way of union. When wilt thou attain unto the time when God is all to thee, and thou hast no will nor fear nor love apart from Him? O when shall I ascend into this hill of the Lord? How full am I filled with love of earthly things, and of myself! How easily the fear of men calls me away from what is good! O my God, and my all!

WEDNESDAY

OF THE APOSTLES' RETURN TO JERUSALEM.

1. *And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem.* Luke xxiv. 52.

Obedying the angels' behest they turn them from that place wherein they had too long tarried, tasting of so great consolation. If thou art bidden to go elsewhere, or to do aught that causeth thee trouble or depriveth thee of spiritual consolation, then bethink thee of the reward of obedience.

2. *With great joy.* Luke xxiv. 52.

Joy, because they have seen the glory of the Lord; because they have received a blessing on their labours, and have good hope that the Lord will prosper them; because He hath promised to prepare a place for them, and they trust that at the last they also may thither ascend. Such be the joys of God's servants: far other the noxious vanities which delight the world.

3. *They went up into the upper room, and there abode.* Acts i. 13.

(1) Herein they shewed obedience unto the command of Christ, who had bidden them return to Jerusalem. (2) But likewise they shewed their knowledge of their own weakness; fearing that they might faint and fail if they went forth afore they should be endued with power from on high. Do thou also take knowledge how little thou canst do without the help of Him that can do all things: if thou wouldest do anything at all, thou must unite thy weakness to His almighty power.

THURSDAY

OF THE ELECTION OF S. MATTHIAS.

1. *This scripture must needs have been fulfilled. . . . His bishoprick let another take.* Acts i. 16, 20.

Another therefore must be set in Judas' place. Behold the providence of God which ceaseth not to supply fit ministers in the Church and faithful servants in the orders of religion. When one faileth, God provideth another. Hast thou also in thy ministry taken the place of another that is dead? Stand thou in fear and in humility when thou seest that even an Apostle hath failed.

2. *And they appointed two, Joseph . . . and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou Lord . . . shew whether . . . thou hast chosen.* Acts i. 23, 24.

Such be the means towards a right election, prayer, and indifferent acceptance of God's good pleasure. For lack of these how many ill choices hast thou made! How much better would have been all thy choices, hadst thou but used these means! Let thy loss teach thee wisdom.

3. *And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias.* Acts i. 26.

Matthias is preferred before Barsabas; though it might appear that Barsabas were more worthy, inasmuch as he is mentioned before the other and beareth the honourable surname of Justus: yet is not Matthias' heart lifted up, nor Barsabas' cast down. Each of the twain accepteth the decision of God. If thou be preferred before another, be a Matthias: if thou be set in a lower place, a Barsabas.

FRIDAY

OF THE EXPECTATION OF THE HOLY GHOST.

1. *Tarry ye in the city.* Luke xxiv. 49.

Obeying this command of Christ, the Apostles withdraw themselves from the business and tumult of the market-place, to await the Holy Ghost, whom God had promised. So all that time they lived apart from the things of this world and intercourse with men. The Holy Ghost is the Tongue of God: yet is His voice *not heard in the cross-roads, nor perceived in the places of assembly.* A man must turn wholly inward if he would perceive that voice. Depart then from distractions and recollect thyself. The soul that is dispersed abroad may not enjoy the presence of God. If they so did to whom Christ vouchsafed the revelation of the coming of the Holy Ghost, how much more must thou!

2. *Until ye be endued with power.* Luke xxiv. 49.

In this recollection of spirit they awaited the fulfilment of that word *until.* Believing without all doubt in the coming of the Holy Ghost, they knew not the hour thereof and therefore so behaved themselves as to be found ever ready. Delay would

be but an occasion for long-suffering and patience, for ardent longing with a quiet mind, for true indifference that would have Him come when it should please God to send Him. So likewise shouldest thou be indifferent whether thou hast or hast not spiritual consolations, looking for nothing but that God's will be done and that all thy contrary wishes be held of no account.

3. *They all continued . . . in prayer.* Acts i. 14.

They knew right well that God *will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him*; therefore in their retreat they gave themselves to prayer. Thou mayest suppose that they made use of divers titles whereby to intreat His presence. As *the soul's true radiancy* they sought Him, to illuminate their own and others' hearts: or as *the Flame of God*, to kindle their own and others' hearts to the love of God and to fulfilment of the apostolic calling. By prayer thou drawest down the Holy Ghost. If thou ask aright be sure that thou shalt receive.

SATURDAY

THE PARTICULAR PREPARATION OF THE APOSTLES FOR
THE RECEIVING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

1. *These all continued.* Acts i. 14.

Even Thomas is among them, now that he hath learned what blessings be foregone by him that separateth himself from the common life. He that holdeth fast to the general duties of religion groweth to be a saint indeed. Nor may we leave such duties for the sake of our own spiritual advancement. Peculiarity will lose thee the graces that be common unto all, and the wrongfulness thereof will condemn thee to receive none special to thyself. Where *all* the children of God be gathered together, there must thou be among them,

2. *Continued with one accord.* Acts i. 14.

Yea, with one accord and one mind, as was well seen in their choice of Matthias. Such is that bond of charity, which may not be broken by multitude of assembly, nor by diversity of race, nor by difference of character. They *were of one heart and of one soul*. The Holy Ghost is the very essence of love, and the bond of charity. How canst thou expect Him, if thou break this bond? if thou give offence to the many by cleaving to one alone? if thou avoid them that differ from thyself in race or character?

3. *With the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus.* Acts i. 14.

The Apostles stood first in the ruling of the Church, but Mary in grace and holiness. They exercise their government: she spendeth the time in supplication and in acts of faith and charity. Here is mention made of the Mother of God for the last time in the holy Scriptures. Bethink thee of the many years she passed in the company of the faithful in such holy retirement and fervent prayer. Bethink thee of the high estate of that same Blessed Virgin and join thy prayers with hers.

THE SUNDAY OF PENTECOST

OF THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST IN THE WIND.

1. *When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.* Acts ii. 1.

The time was full of mystery. This was the day on which, long ago, the law of fear was given. To-day, in its stead, is given that law of love, which the Holy Ghost came to write in the hearts of God's faithful people, that thereby Christ's yoke might be

made easy and His burden light. There is no difficulty to him that loveth. O if this very day He might come to me and *write His law in my heart!* So might I serve God not in the bondage of necessity but with filial love.

2. *Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind.* Acts ii. 2.

Ponder the words. *There came a sound:* that thereby He might seize upon their attention, and strike the unheeding with amazement. And I even now am not aroused, so deep is the slumber of my soul! *Suddenly*, for that there be no limits assigned unto the coming of the Holy Ghost: ever must we seek Him, ever expect Him. *From heaven:* whence cometh every good gift, even the Son of God, and every perfect gift, even the Holy Ghost. *As of a . . . wind*, the divers properties whereof thou mayest consider as fitting images of the Spirit's nature. *Mighty*, to bid us mark that vehement assault that constraineth man's heart to virtuous action. O how my slothful heart standeth in need of this mighty rushing wind! Come, Holy Ghost, and blow upon the garden of my heart.

3. *And it filled all the house where they were sitting.* Acts ii. 2.

Herein is signified that abundance of gifts wherewith God filleth the Church. None in that upper room, none in the Church, is excluded. Pray Him to fill all the house of thy soul. Open to Him every corner, every secret place, that He may come there. Yet will He not so fill thee unless thou *sit* in interior quiet and composure of thy mind. He filleth not that soul which wandereth hither and thither, and wasteth her attention on outward things.

MONDAY

OF THE COMING OF THE SAME IN THE FIERY TONGUES.

1. *There appeared unto them cloven tongues.*
Acts ii. 3.

The Holy Ghost was not to be an idle Gift to the Apostles. He came to make them heralds of the new law. So was He given to each under the form of a tongue, for this cause, and likewise for the speaking of the wonderful works of God. So from thy tongue thou mayest prove whether thou hast the Holy Ghost within thy heart. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; the fruit of thy lips was first conceived in thy heart. Look well then and see if thou have this tongue of the Spirit: if thou find it not, thou hast somewhat to correct.

2. *Like as of fire.* Acts ii. 3.

At other times He appeared in other forms, such as were the cloud, the dove, the river. Now He shewed Himself under the appearance of a fire whereby the Apostles, themselves first enlightened might enlighten others, themselves enkindled might enkindle them, and purify the hearts of sinners. These be the chiefest gifts of a preacher of the Gospel. How standest thou in need of this fire to lighten thy darkness and save thee from evil habits; to kindle thy heart with love to God and to thy neighbour! Come, thou Holy Spirit, Our senses with thy light inflame, Our hearts to heavenly love reclaim.

3. *And it sat upon each of them.* Acts ii. 3.

This sitting, saith S. Gregory Nazianzene, signifieth the excellence of royal dignity in the Holy Ghost, whereby He took the dominion over their hearts. He sat, never henceforth to depart from them, inasmuch as the Apostles were even now confirmed in grace.

Would that the same Spirit would assume His royal dignity within thy heart, and confirm thee against thine own inconstant changefulness! He is ready to take dominion over thee, if thou wilt, if thou refuse the dominion of the flesh and render obedience to His inspirations. He is ready to confirm thee, if thou wilt, if this thy willing be vigorous and persevere. It is on thy will that all dependeth.

TUESDAY

OF THE END FOR WHICH THE HOLY GHOST WAS SENT.

1. *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter . . . even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive.* John xiv. 16, 17.

The first end is that He may be a *Comforter*, or a *Consoler*. He consoleth us inasmuch as He is the *Spirit of truth*, distinguishing the false from the true. Our afflictions are often mere phantoms of the imagination. Unveil the truth and consolation is at hand: thou shalt see that it was but a shadow that afflicted thee.

2. *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.* John xvi. 13.

The second end is that He may give the Apostles understanding of all that Christ taught, whether openly or secretly, and that they may hand on such understanding to the whole Church. Behold the careful providence of God for the removal of all errors from the minds of His own people. For it is the understanding that leadeth the will, and sometimes leadeth it astray. Then how weighty a matter is it that the understanding should detect all fallacies, and be itself deeply imbued with the principles of truth, lest it succumb to the principles of the flesh or

of the world and thus lead the will astray! Now by what principles is thine own understanding governed? Be they consonant with truth?

3. *When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.* John xvi. 8.

The third end is that by the Apostles He may reprove the world for its amendment. Why is the function of reproof assigned to the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of love? In order that every rebuke may be given in this same Spirit of love and gentleness. Mark the three points of His reproof: of the sin of unbelief; of righteousness, because the world thinketh itself righteous; of judgment, because it maketh the devil prince of this world. What of thine own faith? Is it stablished by works? Dost thou falsely think thyself righteous? Dost thou give heed to the suggestions of the devil?

WEDNESDAY

OF THE OPERATION OF THE HOLY GHOST WITHIN THE APOSTLES.

1. *But ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.* Acts i. 5.

He calleth the gift of the Holy Ghost by the name of Baptism to signify that thereby the Apostles received the chiefest of the effects of Baptism; that is to say, cleansing from sin, remission of penalty, grace, perfect charity, union with God, and the habitual possession of the supernatural virtues. Happy the Apostles in their lot: unhappy thou in thine! How much of all this hast thou lost! Come, thou Holy Spirit, To us thy grace celestial give, Who of thy breathing move and live.

2. *The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.* Romans v. 5.

Now the hearts of those Apostles who erstwhile had trembled at a damsel's word or fled for fear of death are filled with zeal for the conversion of the whole world for the glory of God, without fear of danger, torment or death. That zeal is nothing less than pure love. Hast thou such a zeal for the glory of God? Dost thou seek for the salvation of souls? or even of thine own? What obstacles art thou overcoming to achieve this end? Nay, what very shadows dost thou not fear?

3. *They . . . began to speak with other tongues.* Acts ii. 4.

Forasmuch as they were to preach the Gospel to all nations, they were endowed by the Holy Ghost with every tongue, to signify the unity of the whole world in Christ. Thus God gave them graces agreeable to the object of their calling. Even so dealeth He with all men. Whom He calleth, them He also maketh apt for the fulfilment of their calling. He will not fail thee, if thou wilt but use those means which He Himself suggesteth unto thee. Herein for the most part our own failure lieth. If thou wilt use them, what greatness shalt thou attain!

THURSDAY

OF THE APOSTLES' ACTIONS IN THE POWER OF THE
HOLY GHOST.

1. *They . . . began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.* Acts ii. 4.

Having received the Holy Ghost, the Apostles, leaping up, proclaim the wonderful works of God.

Hitherto unlearned, now be they filled with wisdom : hitherto fearful and cowardly, now they despise torment and death. He that is moved by the Spirit feareth nothing while he obeyeth that His motion. Tarry not, nor fear, when thou perceivest that He moveth thee. He that hath bidden will achieve His end.

2. *And they were all amazed and marvelled. . . . Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.*
Acts ii. 7, 13.

Truly here was a marvellous thing, such wisdom, such knowledge of all tongues, such eloquent expounding of mysteries, such zeal, such fortitude. But an evil tongue can let nothing alone. They mock them as *full of new wine*. Thou also must expect thy best actions to be reviled. But as the Apostles left not off their enterprise on this account, so neither do thou. Thou tookest it not in hand for the speech of men, nor must thou put it from thee for the same.

3. *But Peter, standing up . . . lifted up his voice.*
. . . Acts ii. 14.

Taking occasion from the accusation of drunkenness, Peter denieth that they be drunken with wine, and declareth them full of the Holy Ghost. He goeth on to reproach the Jews for crucifying Christ. *When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart* (Acts ii. 37). (1) Learn first to take every occasion of good. Alas, how many have escaped thee ! (2) Learn in the second place to be inebriated with the Holy Ghost, who imbueth a man with forgetfulness of earthly things. (3) Learn also to direct thy words to the pricking of the hearts of them that hear thee. To attain this thou wilt need true zeal and a virtue which is real and solid and unfeigned.

FRIDAY

THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY GHOST IN THE FIRST CHRISTIANS.

1. *They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* Acts ii. 42.

Three thousand were baptized. These forthwith (1) follow the Apostles' doctrine, stern and repugnant to the desires of the flesh ; (2) frequent the Eucharist, with what dispositions ! with what desire ! with what fruitfulness ! and (3) pray, with what humility ! with what faith ! with what perseverance ! Contrast thyself with them. See where thou lackest. Give thyself to the like exercises, for these be the first essential nourishment of the spiritual life.

2. *Were together, and had all things common.* Acts ii. 44.

Those cold words Mine and Thine were never heard. He that hath the Spirit of God within him is easily drawn from the love of earthly things. Empty thyself, and become poor in spirit. The less thy love of riches, the greater will be thy love of the Spirit. Nor can the Spirit enter that heart which is filled with the love of other things.

3. *The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.* Acts iv. 32.

For all the great diversity of nations, of states of life, of talents, there continued perfect concord, no complaining of one against the other, no word nor even thought of ill against a brother. Happy that fellowship of many lives with but one soul and one consent ! *How good and joyful a thing it is : brethren, to dwell together in unity* (Psalm cxxxiii. 1). Wilt thou have the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of thine own vocation ? Take heed for unity, which if thou ever harm, thou harrest the apple of thine eye.

SATURDAY

OF THEM THAT RECEIVE NOT THE HOLY GHOST.

1. *My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh.* Genesis vi. 3.

Let not the man that is given to earthly lusts and pleasures hope for the presence of the Holy Ghost. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. Behold then how thou must mortify thy senses and lusts.

2. *The holy spirit of discipline will flee deceit.* Wisdom i. 5.

Deceit, that is to say the deceiver, who careth only for the appearance of goodness, not for its verity; who cloketh his sensual pleasures with pretence of a good object; who covereth his evil intent with the fair colours of holiness. Such an one will the Holy Spirit flee; for He is the Spirit of Truth and cannot endure the colouring of falsehood. Away then with all deceitfulness and human respect, such as is the foul plague of the soul. Be thine actions candid, simple, and sincere. For *without is whosoever loveth and maketh a lie* (Revelation xxii. 15).

3. *The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive.* John xiv. 17.

Because the world placeth its trust on such false principles as these: that we should seek for riches, honours and fleshly delights and avoid poverty, contempt and the cross. But the principles of the truth are clean contrary to these: therefore the world cannot receive the Spirit of truth. Examine thyself in which of these principles thou putttest thine own trust. Own that the principles of the world are false, and the principles of the Spirit are true and firmly established. Follow Christ and conform thyself to these.

TRINITY SUNDAY

OF THE MYSTERY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY.

1. *The Lord our God is one Lord.* Deut. vi. 4.

God is one most simple Entity, infinite in every manner of perfectness, the first beginning and the final end of all things: the one and only highest Good; and therefore the one and only God, beside whom there is none other. I comprehend Thee not: yet I believe in Thee, adore Thee, praise Thee, glorify Thee, fear Thee, love Thee, and serve Thee alone: Thou art the very centre of all my affections. *Ah too late have I known thee, too late loved thee, thou beauty of my desiring!* Many gods have I fashioned for myself, in worshipping and loving myself or things created more than Thee, or giving to such more diligent service than to Thyself. Henceforth Thou only shalt be my God, and all my bones shall praise Thee.

2. *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* Matthew xxviii. 19.

God is one in Essence yet threefold in Persons. The Father by understanding of Himself begetteth the Word: the Father and the Word by the love of Each for Other produce the Holy Ghost. O Trinity unfathomed! I comprehend not this conjunction of perfect unity with perfect and complete distinction: yet I believe, and adore, and praise this mystery. Therefore will I devote myself unto a lively knowledge of God, that, so far as this world of shadows may permit, some image of Him may be generated in my mind. Then may I prize such image above all things! So prizing, may I grow to love the same! thus even in me may the Holy Ghost in some sort be produced!

3. *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God.* Revelation iv. 8.

In the Trinity of Persons there existeth an utter

equality of all perfections: Each hath the same goodness, the same glory, the same incomprehensibility, the same eternity, the same omnipotence, the same justice, yea, every attribute the same, but all are comprehended in Their holiness; this therefore is the attribute most chiefly brought to our remembrance. Now every creature is in some sort a copy of God: but for the copying of all His perfections the only model set before us is His holiness: *Ye shall be holy; for I am holy* (Leviticus xi. 44); not power, nor exaltation, nor that knowledge which the angels and the first man sought after and miserably perished. Bestir thyself therefore to imitate the holiness of God. How vast thy falling short!

MONDAY

OF THE PERSON OF THE ETERNAL FATHER.

1. *Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth?* Isaiah lxvi. 9.

(1) The Father is the Fount and Origin of the Divine Processions and perfections. He proceedeth from none: the other Persons proceed from Him. By knowing of Himself He produceth the Son, and to Him He communicateth His entire Essence, and all perfections without end. Thou understandest not? Lead then thine understanding captive unto faith. With all the angels humbly adore, praise, glorify and love. (2) He begetteth the Son in such sort that the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son: the Father and the Son are One. O Father, grant that we may be one, as Thou and Thy Son are One.

2. *Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.* Ephesians iii. 15.

Within the Godhead the Father begetteth of His own Essence one only Son, consubstantial with Himself : but outside thereof He granteth unto many that they shall be called the sons of God by adoption and grace. Behold the grandeur of the Adopter, the lowliness of the adopted. Here hast thou cause for shame, and joy, and fear : for shame that thou hast so highly esteemed the titles of the world, so meanly this title of a son of God ; for joy that thou canst be God's son and heir ; for fear, yea, and for anxious care, lest thou lose thy privilege.

3. *In thine hand is there not power and might?*
2 Chronicles xx. 6.

All perfections without end and all exterior action belongeth to the whole Trinity in general : yet the Father as Fount and Origin of all hath especially this attribute of power which giveth their being unto all things that are. Thou also art brought into being by Him from nought : thou art His, whatever thou art. Render thyself then to Him to whom thou belongest. Thine own nature, yea, every creature hath all this time been crying in thine ears, *It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves* (Psalm c. 3) ; yet how often hast thou stopped thine ears and worshipped the creature more than the Creator ! Art thou not ashamed ? Now henceforth what wilt thou do ?

TUESDAY

OF THE PERSON OF THE SON.

1. *The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father.* John i. 18.

The Son begotten of the Father is the substantial image of the Father, possessing the selfsame Nature undivided and the selfsame perfections without end.

He is *the Only-begotten*, and to Him is communicated all that the Father can communicate. He is *in the bosom of the Father* and shareth in His knowledge, and love, and beatitude, and in the producing of the Holy Ghost. Believe in Him; praise Him; glorify Him; love Him. Whose image art thou? Art thou not the image of God? To be such an image thou wast created; but how hast thou defiled it!

2. *Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.* Romans viii. 29.

The one and only Son and Heir refuseth not a multitude of brethren by adoption and joint-heirs: nay, Himself adopteth them by assumption of humanity and stablisheth this grace with His own Blood. So hast thou God's Son for Brother. Ah, grace of God! ah, glory of thy lot! Too lightly hast thou valued them. Now gaze again on this same image, that thou mayest observe and make good the breaches thereof.

3. *In wisdom hast thou made them all.* Psalm civ. 24.

The Son is the Wisdom of the Father. To Him is owed all supernatural illumination and knowledge: inasmuch as He *lighteth every man that cometh into the world* (John i. 9). Seek then from Him the true wisdom, which standeth in the knowing and valuing of all things as they truly are: so mayest thou see for what they are things earthly and divine, things transitory and eternal: so mayest thou pass through things temporal and cleave to things eternal.

WEDNESDAY

OF THE PERSON OF THE HOLY GHOST.

1. *I will send unto you from the Father the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father.* John xv. 26.

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son is the substantial love whereby Each in Each inhereth. He possesseth in common with the Father and the Son the very same Essence, eternity and infinite perfections, and with Them together is worshipped and glorified. Believe in Him; praise Him; adore Him; give Him thanks. O that I too might be united unto God in the same Spirit!

2. *Ye have received the Spirit of adoption.* Romans viii. 15.

Those that the Father adopteth as sons and the Son as brethren the Holy Ghost daily leadeth on to perfection by communicating to them His very self, His supernatural gifts, and that habitual grace, which is a sharing in the Divine Nature. Yet how often hast thou *resisted the Holy Ghost*, and withstood the making perfect of thy sonship! Henceforth *grieve not the Holy Spirit of God* (Ephesians iv. 30). Be sure that the more thy heart rejoiceth in anything apart from God, the more the Holy Spirit is grieved thereby.

3. *Wisdom is a loving spirit.* Wisdom i. 6.

Goodness, love and mercy, though they be common to all the Persons of the Trinity, are yet the especial attributes of the Holy Ghost. To Him thou owest thy safe conduct into this good land, the mercy God hath shewn thee, the tears whereby thou hast washed away thy sins. What renderest thou unto Him for these? Take heed, if thou abidest thus un-

grateful, lest He also withdraw His mercy from thee and leave off to make intercession for thee with groanings which cannot be uttered.

THURSDAY

OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST TOWARDS US IN THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT.

1. *This is my body . . . this is my blood.* Matthew xxvi. 26, 28.

In the Eucharist is the same Body that was taken in the Incarnation, the same Blood that was shed upon the cross. Christ's shewing forth of Himself in the Eucharist is a work of love equal to His Incarnation and His Death. Therefore thy debt to Him for His coming to thee in this sacrament equalleth the whole world's debt for His Incarnation and His Death. Who art Thou, O Lord, and who am I? Yet how slight my service unto Thee, how gross my service of myself and every vanity!

2. *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.* John vi. 56.

He concealed Himself beneath the elements of bread and wine that He might be incorporated in us and pass into our very substance by way of food. Thou beholdest the love wherewith Jesus desireth to be one with thee. How pure and stainless then should be thy heart, withdrawn from all created things and cleaving to God alone! He that loveth other things apart from God, loveth not God as he should love Him.

3. *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.* John vi. 55.

He gave unto us a Divine Food that we might live a Divine life. He endowed the earthly elements with

heavenly grace as a means whereby He might satisfy our spiritual hunger with the very substance of His Flesh and Blood. Have we not here a token of love that is verily Divine? Should not this Food suffice my every appetite? Again and again I am thus refreshed; yet my soul lusteth for the flesh pots of Egypt, for sensual delights, and all created things. O shame upon me!

FRIDAY

THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST IS A MEMORIAL OF THE
PASSION OF CHRIST.

1. *He instituted this sacrament as a perpetual memorial of his Passion.* S. Thomas Aquinas, opusc. iii.

That there might be a perpetual memorial of the bloody Sacrifice He instituted an unbloody Sacrifice to be offered daily. Himself immolated once for all, He devised a means whereby the memory of that Sacrifice should be again and again renewed. Own thou Christ's love in thus often offering Himself on thy behalf. Thou makest no return unless thou thyself be immolated day by day. For *they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts* (Galatians v. 24).

2. *This do in remembrance of me.* Luke xxii. 19.

He willed to be Himself in His own Person the Memorial of His Passion: judge therefore the value that He set upon the same. Thou art bound then to a continual memory of this great benefit, and to a memory which standeth not in the bare thinking thereupon but passeth on to the affections of the heart and to outward action. *We that celebrate the mysteries of the Lord's Passion* (saith S. Gregory) *should imitate that which we enact.*

3. *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death.* 1 Corinthians xi. 26.

As often as thou takest the Eucharist imagine thyself the sepulchre of the dead Christ. Of this thou mayest not be worthy unless thou be renewed: forasmuch as He willed to be put in a *new tomb*. But thou canst not be new unless thou put the old man to death. *While we perform this rite*, saith S. Gregory, *we must slay ourselves before God by contrition of heart*. What sayest thou to this? Draw out the sword and present thyself a victim unto Him that gave Himself a Victim for thy sake.

SATURDAY

OF THE DIGNITY OF HIM THAT TAKETH THE EUCHARIST.

1. *We will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* John xiv. 23.

He that taketh the Eucharist becometh an habitation of God. For measuring of such a dignity consider the womb of the most Blessed Virgin, where first He dwelt, being made Man: how great were the graces which He showered on her! It is this same Jesus who in the Eucharist maketh His lodging with thee. How great the dignity of such an habitation! Suffer no foul beasts, no wild passions, to lodge therein.

2. *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.* John vi. 56.

He that taketh the Eucharist not only becometh an habitation of God, but by a marvellous union is made one with him. Make reckoning, if thou canst, of this height of dignity—to be made one with the Human Nature of Christ, and thus, by the mediation

thereof, with the very Person of the Word and with the wholeness of the Trinity. Consider the duties laid upon thee by a dignity so great : thou who art united with God must drag thyself out of the mire of things created ; must keep thy words and deeds and thoughts from all that ill becometh a member of Christ.

3. *I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.* John vi. 57.

Mark well the lofty estate of him that is united with Christ. Christ receiveth from the Father His being, His life, all His perfections, so that He is one God with the Father, liveth in Him, hath the self-same perfections of understanding, of action, and of will. Even so through taking of the Eucharist thou art made partaker of the life of Christ and of His perfections. Therefore thy feeling, thy willing, thy acting, thy suffering should be one with His. Yea, and this will He bring to pass in thee by the virtue of this union, if thou resist Him not.

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST IS A GREAT SUPPER

1. *A certain man made a great supper, and bade many.* Luke xiv. 16.

The Eucharist is a *supper*, made ready in the evening of the world ; taken in the dark night by the light of faith. It is *great*: the Host is God ; the banquet is Christ in His two Natures, Human and Divine ; the guests are the whole company of the faithful ; the servants are the angels. All herein is great : thou alone art small and unworthy ; yet God made Man inviteth even thee. Let all thy hunger and thy thirst be set thereon. *Be not desirous of the dainties of the world and the flesh : for they are deceitful meat* (Proverbs xxiii. 3).

2. *And they all with one consent began to make excuse.* Luke xiv. 18.

To make excuse, or even to refuse to come. The goodness of the Master hath a welcome for all: they that are bidden shut themselves out by their own malice. There be three manners of excuse. The piece of ground that one hath bought denoteth domination and pride. (So S. Austin teacheth us.) The oxen bought by another betoken avarice, or perchance the five senses which draw men along the ways of earth. The wife that another hath married standeth for the lusts of the flesh. The first two pray to be excused, though they disdain to come, *shewing humility in word, but pride in action*, as saith S. Gregory. The third alone saith, *I cannot come*: for, as saith S. Cyril of Alexandria, *the mind that is given over to earthly pleasures is weakened thereby and cannot carry out the will of God*. These three for the most part be the reasons which, if they cause thee not to withdraw thyself from the Lord's Supper, yet diminish the fruitfulness thereof. See that thou refuse not Him that calleth thee.

3. *Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.* Luke xiv. 21.

The master doeth well to be angry at the rejection of his great kindness and hospitality. *The poor and the maimed*, saith S. Gregory, *be they who judge themselves to be weakly*. With what ardour doth the Master bid His guests: but with what languor drawest thou near! He seeketh them from every quarter, and turneth not away from the weak things of the world. Nor must thou let the knowledge of thy infirmity turn thee back, for, as saith S. Ambrose, *him that He hath called He maketh worthy of his calling, if he do but follow it*: yea, He *healeth all thine infirmities* (Psalm ciii. 3).

MONDAY

OF THE DISPOSITION FOR THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST.

1. *In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun.*
Psalm xix. 5.

The soul that looketh for the coming of God in the Eucharist must strive for perfect purity. So much is demanded by the perfect purity and the majesty of its Guest. Ponder who it is that cometh and to whom. If such resplendent purity befitted the Mother who should conceive Him, the like purity would befit thee who dost receive Him. But purity standeth not only in immunity from every sin, but in the purging of the affections and adornment with all virtues. Canst thou say that thou art in this wise cleansed? How much toil is yet needed to attain thereto! Yet shalt thou attain, if thou earnestly willest so to do. Say with the leper (Matthew viii. 2), *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* Only believe: He will put forth His hand and say, *I will; be thou clean.*

2. *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life.* Revelation ii. 7.

To have the fruition of this mystery thou must needs overcome thyself, and subdue thine appetite to thy reason, and thy reason unto God. So then the worthiness of thine approach sufficeth not unless thou shalt thus overcome thyself. How vast a battlefield within thee awaiteth victory! Behold thine enemies: pride, ambition, conceit of thyself, desire of vain-glory, anger, impatience, spiritual languor, lukewarmness, and yet others which thou knowest well. Overcome them, and there will be given to thee of *the tree of life.* How different would be thine estate if thou hadst overcome but one of these thine enemies, as often as thou hast drawn nigh to take this Food!

3. *Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather.* Exodus xvi. 4.

Here thou findest the promise of the manna, which is a figure of the Eucharist, and falleth like the rain upon the just and the unjust. How great the goodness of God who bestoweth Himself thus liberally! But to possess thyself thereof, thou must *go out*. Whence? Whither? S. Rupert answereth thy question: Thou must go out, he saith, *from thy former conversation, from thine old life. For we may not gather this manna, until we have put off the old man.* Ponder how the old man yet liveth in thee, and how much of him remaineth to be slain ere thou put on the new life.

TUESDAY

OF THE DISPOSITION OF THE SOUL FOR THE MOST
HOLY EUCHARIST.

1. *I . . . will satisfy her poor with bread.*
Psalm cxxxii. 16.

Blessed is poverty, for this alone (as saith Rupert) *draweth from the King of kings a royal bounty, even the gift of Himself.* This Bread is the bounty of the great God. Empty thyself, empty thyself, that thou mayest become poor and worthy thereof. Cast out the love and vanities of this world. A rich man is unworthy to receive alms, a worldly man the Eucharist. Know thou that He who filleth *the hungry poor with good things* will send *the rich empty away.* This peradventure is the cause why thy frequent taking of this holy Mystery beareth so little fruit.

2. *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.* John vii. 37.

We needs must bring unto this Food a thirst, an

hunger, a vehement desire. This fountain of sacramental grace is open only to him that is athirst: *I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life* (Revelation xxi. 6). *For the ardour of a holy longing must go before his face in every soul to which he purposeth to come.* O soul lukewarm! Wouldest thou not esteem it sacrilege to loathe this precious Food? Yet in truth if thou long not for it, thou art not far from loathing. Therefore, so often as thou drawest near, arouse a fervent longing in thy heart. The way thereto is by an act of faith in the dignity of this same Food, in God's love for thee, and in the fruits which issue from taking of the Eucharist.

3. *When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding . . . sit down in the lowest room.* Luke xiv. 8, 10.

Thou art about to draw nigh unto the wedding feast of God who betrotheth thee unto Himself. Who art thou? and who is He? In His majesty dost thou acknowledge thine own unworthiness? Yet mayest thou become worthy if thou art truly humble of heart. *He hath regarded: the lowliness of his hand-maiden* (Luke i. 48), in entering her most holy womb. Nor will He despise thy lowliness. And how much there is to bring thee low, if thou ponder this well: Who art thou? Who is He?

WEDNESDAY

OF THE EFFECTS OF THE TAKING OF THE EUCHARIST.

1. *They had an eye unto him, and were lightened.* Psalm xxxiv. 5.

It is a fruit of drawing nigh to Christ that a man be lightened in the eye of his understanding for the knowing of deepest mysteries. He is the *Light, which lighteth every man*. Ponder thou the darkness of thy mind, thy blindness to the things of God. Knowest

thou that the eyes of the disciples were opened in the breaking of bread? (Luke xxiv. 30, 31, 35). Lo, this same Christ can heal thy blindness. He asketh thee, as once He asked the blind man of Jericho, *What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?* (Luke xviii. 41). His loving-kindness goeth forth to meet thee. Like that blind man say with confidence, *Lord, that I may receive my sight*, that I may look on Thee, that I may see myself.

2. *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things: making thee young and lusty as an eagle.* Psalm ciii. 5.

Souls have their time of decay when they care not for virtuous action: and their time of lusty youth and vigour. Too often thou allowest such decay to hold thee when thou shouldest be walking in newness of life. The true secret of youth renewed is that God satisfy thy mouth with good things. If then S. Hierome saith truly that *our one good in this life is to feed upon the Lord's Flesh*, by worthy taking of the same thou shalt renew thy youth. Mark well the benefit hereof; praise God and love Him; long eagerly for this gift; and often as thou drawest nigh put off somewhat of the old man.

3. *Mary arose . . . and went into the hill country with haste.* Luke i. 39.

Such was the effect of God conceived. *All filled with God*, saith S. Ambrose, *whither should she press with such haste but to the heights?* It is the same God whom thou receivest in the Eucharist. If thou resist Him not He will work the like effect in thee: will move thee to press on up the steep path with ardent will, yea, and attain with haste unto the high peaks of perfection. God desireth this for thee: work then with Him, that He find thee not always slothfully reposing at the bottom of the hill. God will draw thee upward, but thou must do thy part.

THURSDAY

OF OTHER EFFECTS OF TAKING OF THE EUCHARIST.

1. *Man did eat angels' food.* Psalm lxxviii. 26.

The most Holy Eucharist is called *angels' food*, not that the angels feed thereon, but that men by the taking of it become as the angels. So saith S. Hugh : *It hath been given unto men that they may become angels.* Well were it for thee couldest thou be as it were delivered from the flesh, all compounded of spirit, immune from temptation, free from the slavery of thy passions ! But if this hath not yet come to pass in thee, the hindrance hath been in thyself. What madness is it to refuse angelical perfection !

2. *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.* John i. 12.

The effect of the Sacraments of the Church is to make thee a son of God, not indeed by nature but by adoption. By the same means thou enterest straightway upon thine inheritance. *And if children, then heirs* (Romans viii. 17). O wondrous honour ! Who is thy Father ? Who thy Brother ? Ponder it well. What should be the affection, the reverence, the confidence with which thou shouldest approach ! Yet how degenerate a son and brother hast thou been hitherto ! Art thou not ashamed ? Now how wilt thou behave thyself henceforth, that thou mayest have a right to call God thy Father and Jesus thy Brother ?

3. *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.* John vi. 56.

The dignity whereto thou attainest by the Holy Eucharist riseth yet higher. Not only becomest thou a son of God : thou art made one with Him, so that He dwelleth in thee, and thou in Him. But or ever this may come to pass, all of thyself must die in thee,

and God alone must live in thee. When will that time come when thou canst truly say : *Nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me?* (Galatians ii. 20).

FRIDAY

OF THE INFINITE PERFECTION OF GOD.

1. *Of him, and through him, and to him are all things.* Romans xi. 36.

In God existeth all perfection, goodness, holiness, beauty, wisdom, power, felicity and the like, that a man may conceive, yet in a manner infinitely surpassing his conception. From Him and through Him are all things that seem to partake of perfection. My God and my all ! Thou in Thyself art, and of necessity must be : every created thing in itself is and must be mere nothing. How then shall I refuse my love to Thee and spend it upon nothing ? Thou art my God, the only worthy Object of my love. Happy were I could I but offer worthy service to Thy great Majesty.

2. *To him are all things.* Romans xi. 36.

To Him, and likewise in Him ; not only existing in Him in an eminent degree, but also having in Him their ideal being, the archetype of all their perfection. In Him especially is the ideal being of all creatures that have understanding, which He made after His own image and likeness, and maintaining them in being ever changeth them into the same image. How grand is this archetype, set before thee for thine imitation ! Pour out thereon thy praise, and thanks, and love. But compare thine own soul's countenance therewith : what is it but a mockery ? Strive then to gaze unceasingly on God. Renounce thy present standard : set thyself to that one which is incumbent upon thee.

3. *To him are all things.* Romans xi. 36.

To Him, and likewise in Him. All the numberless perfections that be dispersed throughout the whole creation exist in God as one identical perfection, which in itself is wisdom, goodness, mercy and the rest; yet neither is it composed of these, nor possesseth them in distinction each from other. It followeth then that what is one, yet admitteth diversity within its unity is most like God. Art thou one in the unity of thine intention? Thou hast but one intention, it may be, at one time: yet canst thou not unite the many into one, but leavest them diverse and repugnant one to another, intending to please both God and man, to serve both God and thy bodily senses. Now keep one simple intention, referring all to God; but let the several virtues supply each its diverse motive for the performance of the selfsame act: so shall the act be one, but its perfection manifold.

SATURDAY

OF THE WISDOM OF GOD, AND HIS CONTEMPLATION
OF HIMSELF.

1. *All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him.* Hebrews iv. 13.

He knoweth whatever may be known, all the mysteries of His own interior Being, all that hath been or could be fashioned external to Himself, yea and the very secrets of all hearts. For His wisdom findeth out all things that be done throughout the world, and ordereth all things by number, and weight, and measure. All the wisdom of the angels in comparison with it is very ignorance. Do thou believe and set thine heart thereon; render thy praise and love; hope that this Divine Wisdom will find the

remedy for every chance and accident of this life : commit thyself to her disposition. Model thyself on her : take time to consider thy ways ; do nothing rashly. Yea, mark well what thou doest, for God seeth all.

2. *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight.* Hebrews iv. 13.

All creatures are thus manifest : not those alone that have been, are, or shall be ; but such as never shall be, but would be under some condition. Thus (take we an example) His knowledge hath set thee before His eyes in every possible time and place and circumstance, and hath foreseen in each how thou wouldest behave thyself. What therefore dost thou not owe to God for that He hath not given thee for parent an idolater, nor set thee in a time or place of unbelief, nor in surroundings which would surely have brought thee unto ruin ! Praise, magnify and love His name for this : yet stand in fear ; it may be that He hath foreseen some circumstance in which thou wouldest surely forsake Him ; and peradventure all dependeth on thyself, if thy neglect of proffered grace would lead thee thereinto.

3. Consider that the first and necessary object of God's knowledge is Himself, in all His essence, attributes, and perfections both absolute and personal. From this His knowledge ariseth infinite esteem and love of Himself, infinite joy and beatitude. This knowledge is unchangeable and eternal, nor doth the extension of His mighty power to all His works at every moment withdraw Him from the contemplation of Himself. Make it thy chief endeavour to be like God in this. See that thou suffer not every fly to draw thee from thy contemplation of Him, and let thy contemplation lead thee on to worshipful esteem.

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

OF THE MIGHT AND DOMINION OF GOD.

1. *Marvellous is his power.* Ecclesiasticus xliii. 29.

He is almighty inasmuch as His power is infinite, and can accomplish anything which in itself is possible, such as the creation of this world out of nothing and of others without limit, or likewise their destruction or annihilation. From His power dependeth all the force of secondary causes; and in comparison with it all other power is very weakness. Let this power of God move thee to wonder, adoration, blessing and esteem; and in all thy necessities implore the assistance thereof. Though of thine own self thou canst do nothing, thou mayest in humble confidence unite thyself to His almightiness: in His strength thou shalt find that thou canst do all things.

2. *Thou, O Lord of all things, who hast need of nothing.* 2 Maccabees xiv. 35.

Supreme, absolute, necessary, and eternal, He is Lord of all, with lordship both of authority and of ownership. His first title thereunto is that He created all things out of nothing: therefore in their very essence all things depend on Him for their being and their powers. Own thyself the work of His hands. Offer to Him thy being and thy powers. If He put thee down or set thee up, if He send affliction or consolation; it is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good.

3. *Thou art Lord of all things.* Esther xiii. 11.

His second title to absolute and supreme Lordship (though there be others without number of which I say nothing) is His continued preservation of that being which by creation He first gave. We are produced by Him without ceasing, and kept in being: all creation is sustained by His hand and kept from

relapsing into the abyss of annihilation. So then all thine acts be acts of God, and thou mayest not make ill use of the powers He hath given. Thou doest Him wrong if thou make thine own glory or benefit the end of thine endeavour, rather than His. But how often this is what thou hast done! Henceforth thou must conform all thine affections unto His, and submit them to His will.

MONDAY

OF THE HOLINESS AND IMMUTABILITY OF GOD.

1. *The Lord our God is holy.* Psalm xcix. 9.

Consider His *interior* holiness in that infinite knowledge of Himself, which is the begetting of the Word; in that infinite love of Himself, which is the producing of the Holy Ghost; in that joy in Himself which He imparteth unto Himself. All this standeth infinitely removed from any shadow of imperfection. Cry out with lively faith, with responsive joy, with adoration, and with shame, Holy, Holy, Holy (Revelation iv. 8). Imitate this holiness of God, be a lover of purity and a hater of uncleanness in thought or in affection.

2. *Holy in all his works.* Psalm cxlv. 17.

Consider His *exterior* holiness as it shineth in His works. Whether thou consider them in themselves or in the end for which He wrought them they be altogether holy and pure and spotless: coming from the Hand of God they can have no blemish of imperfection. Consider also that God cannot but pursue with hatred immutable and eternal every evil which standeth opposed to holiness. Render Him all praise, and glory, and love: loathe those blemishes which mar thy soul: remove all imperfections from thine actions.

3. *I am the Lord, I change not.* Malachi iii. 6.

He loveth, He hateth, He worketh and is free : yet He changeth not. He governeth all things, and lendeth His power from moment to moment unto all that moveth ; production and destruction without limit is in His hands ; yet He ever abideth the same. Men blaspheme Him and do Him wrongs innumerable ; yet is He not disturbed. O thou who changest so lightly, render thy wonder and praise to this perfection, and seek the same for thyself. If thou wouldest be an imitator of this, thou must cast out from thy mind all inordinate motions, and rid thyself of all sudden gestures, and change of voice, and anger in thy countenance.

TUESDAY

OF THAT LOVE OF GOD, WHEREWITH HE LOVETH
HIMSELF AND US.

1. *God is love.* 1 John iv. 8.

God knoweth Himself to be all in all the highest good with no alloy of evil : wherefore He loveth Himself immeasurably by the Holy Ghost who is the substance of His love. Wherefore likewise He rendereth to Himself eternal praise, and referreth all His acts to His own glory. Yea to this end He directeth me and mine. How lofty the height whereto God raiseth me ! But how stubbornly have I resisted His intention, and wrested my acts towards mine own honour and pleasure !

2. *The Father Himself loveth you.* John xvi. 27.

For that He knoweth that all that He hath made is good, therefore He *hateth nothing that he hath made*. Therefore, because He loveth, and because love is a pouring out of self towards the beloved, He

communicateth Himself unto us : He giveth us our natural being, our faculties of body and soul, grace, and gifts supernatural : to man He giveth personality : to me in the Eucharist He giveth Himself. Thou shouldest be moved hereby to wonder and praise and adoration, yea and to love when thou considerest the ends which merit God's love for thee. Resolve to devote thy gifts to those ends for which He gave them thee.

3. *He hath done whatsoever pleased him.* Psalm cxv. 3.

In all these ways He communicateth Himself, yet not by necessity or constraint, but freely, of His only goodness and love. Nor doth He seek His own profit, seeing He is incapable of gain or loss. Let this His propensity to bless move thee to wonder, praise, and thanksgiving. Shame on thee, who will hardly do Him service, unless He force thee to it, who in all things seekest thine own pleasure. Say with the psalmist : *An offering of a free heart will I give thee* (Psalm liv. 6), and, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give the praise* (Psalm cxv. 1).

WEDNESDAY

OF THE GRACIOUSNESS, MERCY, AND JUSTICE OF GOD.

1. *The Lord is loving unto every man.* Psalm cxlv. 9.

He layeth His commands upon us, but tempereth them according to our strength ; He aideth us by His grace to keep them, and worketh with us to that end. He draweth us by grace, and driveth us not by compulsion ; He useth not His prerogative as Lord most High to demand the utmost we can give ; and them that stray He ever calleth back again. Give thyself to praise and adoration and love : be ashamed of

thine own harshness to thy neighbour, when thou demandest more of him than God doth. Be an imitator of God by gentleness of words and unfeigned graciousness of demeanour.

2. *And his mercy is over all his works.* Psalm cxlv. 9.

In God all perfections are equal each to other, since they constitute His very Godhead. Nevertheless in regard to mankind and in effectual operation His mercy standeth pre-eminent, since it is in mercy that He relieveth all our miseries of body or soul (whether we encounter them or bring them on ourselves) by prevention, or by cure, or by help and consolation. Think on that great mercy that He sheweth unto sinners every day, when He hideth His face from their sins and awaiteth their repentance. How greatly hath He shewn His mercy upon thee! What dost thou owe Him? Pay Him thy meed of praise and adoration; let the example of the prodigal son give thee confidence.

3. *Thou . . . punishedst their own inventions.* Psalm xcix. 8.

God is merciful, yet He is also a righteous Avenger. Sin is an injury to His infinite holiness: therefore He maketh reparation for that injury by punishment. There is no sin, in the righteous or the reprobate, weighty or light, no not an idle word, the punishment whereof He faileth to exact. It beseemeth not His majesty to suffer injury and inflict no punishment. Sickness, death, wars and pestilence are punishments for sin. Therefore we must accept them for expiation of guilt from God who hath decreed them for that end. God's justice spareth no man: be astonished, and praise and fear the same. Yea, be an imitator thereof; punish thyself, and take His punishments with a humble and cheerful heart.

THURSDAY

OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

1. *The Lord is my shepherd: therefore can I lack nothing.* Psalm xxiii. 1.

God's Providence is His ordaining and applying of the means whereby He willeth to lead any of His creatures to that end He hath in view. No creature is excluded therefrom, for *he . . . careth for all alike* (Wisdom vi. 7); no, not a fly, not a worm, not the wicked, nor the godless, nor any by whom He is so grievously offended. He is as careful for every creature as though there were none other in the whole world. Bethink thee again by what means He hath led thee hitherto; how gentle, how effectual. And how canst thou be so free of care as by resignation of thy whole self to the Providence of God, leaving to Him the disposition of body, soul, habitation and all else? How firm a hope may fill thy breast if only thou withstand not His ordering.

2. *Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good.* Genesis i. 20.

In this same Providence God sendeth adversities, famine, pestilence, war, temptations of the devil, ailments of the body, afflictions of the mind: yet He bringeth it to pass, that *all things work together for good to them that love God*. Remember how Joseph was sold. See how He maketh use of such calamities as means to bring His ends to pass. Have thou a worshipful regard to all that He disposeth. Wisdom erreth not, and goodness causeth not to err. Nothing shall befall thee which may not turn to thine advantage. So then receive thine affliction as from God with a glad and cheerful heart. Say, with His Son: *The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* and henceforth, *My time is in thy hand* (Psalm xxxi. 17).

3. *I will lay me down in peace . . . for it is thou, Lord, only, that makest me dwell in safety.* Psalm iv. 9.

He that buildeth all his hope upon the Providence of God, and therefore committeth himself unto Him wholly, doth indeed lay him down in peace and take his rest, in perfect tranquillity of mind and joyfulness of heart, disturbed by nothing that can happen unto him. How full of pleasure is such a life! This is the very liberty of the children of God. Cast then *all thy care upon him: for he careth for thee* (1 Peter v. 7).

FRIDAY

OF THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY AND THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

1. *Do not I fill heaven and earth?* Jeremiah xxiii. 24.

Wherever space exists, real or imagined, there is God. So then thou canst find no place where thou mayest be hidden from His countenance. God is already in thy place of refuge. Thy hidden paths lie open to His sight. So also thou mayest enjoy His company in all places alike. [If it be God that thou seekest, know that thou shalt find Him in every place whither obedience calleth thee. No place is too vile to contain Him: why then dost avoid this one or that?]]

2. *I fill heaven and earth.* Jeremiah xxiii. 24.

Consider the modes wherein God is everywhere. (1) By essence after the entirety of His Godhead. So therefore in this place where now I stand there is the Father, there is begotten the Son, there breatheth the Holy Ghost. [Therefore am I never alone.] Therefore

have I ever a Friend with whom I may converse. Therefore in all places I have God to reverence and fear. (2) By presence, and that a lively presence whereby He observeth all things and taketh knowledge of them. Thus is He present to one that prayeth, that is tempted, or afflicted, that performeth some good work. Do thou then believe in this His presence, love Him, put thy whole trust in Him, study to be pleasing to no eye but His. (3) By power, inasmuch He worketh everywhere, keeping and sustaining all things in being. [Therefore will I not be downcast in adversity, for thou art with me, and helpest my infirmity.]

3. *He is not far from every one of us.* Acts xvii. 27.

Consider also that God is present with thee, and far closer to thee than thine own soul. Within thee is the Father, so likewise is the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Godhead in fullness, by essence, by presence, by power. It is His Goodness that giveth thee thy being, His Wisdom thine understanding, His Almighty power thy power to act. Let thy heart be filled with joy and wonder and trust and love : seek God within thyself ; study to be a vessel worthy of His Majesty ; [and never to displease that Companion who is ever with thee.]

SATURDAY

JESUS IS BAPTIZED BY JOHN.

1. *Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.* Matthew iii. 13.

Consider the humbleness of Christ. He that had taken upon Him the form of a sinner now assumed the guise of a penitent. He that is no sinner nor

could be careth not that He is reckoned for such. So He taketh the first steps of His active life under the banner of humility. Be thou filled with amazement, praise Him, give thanks to Him for this example. But thou must follow in His steps, caring not for what men think thee but for what thou art in truth, and for all thy dealings with thy neighbour laying a foundation of humility. *But John forbid him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?* In that moment John acknowledged the Christ whom he now first beheld. From this act sprang reverence, and amazement that He should come to him; humility likewise so that he proclaimed his own need to be baptized. So great a thing is even one experience of knowing God: if then thou strive to know Him well, how deep the affection thou mayest look to have!

2. *And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.* Matthew iii. 15.

Let Me be baptized, that thou mayest fulfil thine office of Baptist: let Me be humbled, and thou obedient. So then, He teacheth, all righteousness is fulfilled by humbleness and obedience. Here is a truth thou hast not fully learned. Be subject then, henceforth, by Christ's example, not to thy superiors alone, or to thine equals; but to them that are below thee.

3. *And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him.* Matthew iii. 16.

After Christ's Baptism three things came to pass. (1) The heavens were opened. Behold the key to unlock the gate of heaven: it is humility; for grace is given to the humble; and grace is the seed whose fruit is glory. Aspire to the heavenly kingdom. Yet remember that it suffereth violence. Such violence

thou mayest do to thyself by humbleness. (2) *He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove.* The Spirit doeth honour to Him that thus humbleth Himself. Deny Him not the savour of thine own humiliation. And on the humble Christ He came down in the form of a pure innocent dove : inasmuch as humbleness preserveth innocence. (3) *And lo a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* He that made Himself an outcast among sinners is declared to be the Son of God. The Father beareth witness that He is well pleased with Christ thus humbling Himself. If God should say to thee, Thou art my beloved son, what would be thine exultation and thy love ! But even so will He speak to thee if with Christ thou hast sought humiliation ; for He *hath respect unto the lowly : as for the proud he beholdeth them afar off.*

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

CHRIST RETIRETH INTO THE WILDERNESS, AND IS
TEMPTED.

1. *Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness.* Matthew iv. 1.

By the Holy Spirit ; not by any spirit of vanity or of this world. The Son of God, yea, likewise all the sons of God are led by the Spirit of God. *Was led up into the wilderness*, not into the crowded city ; where the people, moved by the opened heavens, the descending Spirit and the sound of words, might peradventure have greeted Him with acclamation. Now by what spirit art thou led, or, shall I say, hurled headlong ? and whither hath it brought thee ? Do thou acknowledge thy shame and suffer thyself to be led by the Spirit of God away from the haunts of men, that so thou mayest escape their praises and

applause. *To be tempted of the devil: yea, as S. Ambrose saith, that He might challenge the devil.* Such was the purpose of His retreat. But why would the Son of God be tempted? That thou mayest learn that the sons of God be not exempt from temptations, and mayest shew a brave front against their onset: that thou mayest have One to teach thee how to conquer. Courage then: on to that fight wherein Christ's example sheweth the way of victory!

2. *He was . . . tempted of Satan.* Mark i. 13.

God hath power to forbid the temptation yet hath He permitted it: therefore is the devil so bold. But how much greater boldness will he shew towards thee who hast no such power! Stay thyself in fear. Christ's hunger giveth occasion to tempt Him unto gluttony; at once the devil seizeth it. So watchful is he for every occasion of harm. Now learn this lesson from the devil himself, to be watchful over all that pertaineth unto thy profession, and watchful also for every occasion of evil lest it do thee harm.

3. *When the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God. . .* Matthew iv. 3.

Observe thou in these three temptations of Christ what be the Tempter's chief persuasions and deceits. In the first, Christ is an hungered; therefore he would persuade Him of the needfulness of food. In the second, he soliciteth Him to cast Himself down, using a good motive as a cloke, that God's assistance will be vouchsafed through angels. In the third, for that he cannot give the kingdoms of the world, he sheweth them, and dazzleth the imagination with the greatness thereof. Now consider whether passion hath not led thee astray under pretext of goodness or necessity: whether thou hast not set great store by things which in God's sight are of no account. *But He answered and said, It is written.* Consider how Christ then behaved Himself. (1) He resisteth

the Tempter without delay. Dally not with temptation. He that resisteth not the first onslaught is an easy prey. (2) He refuseth the temptation with this one word, *It is written*, opposing thereunto the command of God. In time of temptation say to thyself : God forbiddeth this, and He will punish it eternally. Then will true spiritual consolations come as angels, and minister unto thee.

MONDAY

OF THE THREE TEMPTATIONS OF CHRIST AND OF HIS VICTORY.

1. *If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.* Matthew iv. 3.

He inciteth Christ to affection so inordinate that He shall work a miracle to get Himself food. This temptation Christ meeteth with generous scorn. *Man shall not live by bread alone*: as though disdainng such necessity and looking to the abundant means by which He might sustain His life. Thus shouldest thou meet the temptations of the senses. Thou wilt get the better of them by contempt more easily than by direct resistance. There be other pleasures that are worthy of man : those of the senses merit but disdain.

2. *If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down.* . . . Matthew iv. 6.

Behold a temptation to vainglory, under the fair cloke of confidence in God. See how He meeteth this : *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*. He exposeth the canker in this fair seeming plan of shewing trust in God by throwing Himself down. Thus shouldest thou meet temptations that wear the guise of good. When thou seest such appearance be

not hasty to conclude that the substance thereof is holy. Examine the ends, the intention, all the circumstances. How often through neglect hereof thou hast gone astray!

3. *All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.* Matthew iv. 9.

Here is seen a right shameless temptation to ambition, assigning to a creature that worship which is due to God. This He rejecteth with indignation: *Get thee hence, Satan.* So must thou meet with indignation such temptations as violate God's honour, or ravish the affections to created things. Take courage and say: *I will worship the Lord my God, and him only will I serve.* See also what the devil thinketh of mortal sin, so that He will risk his entire kingdom for one such. Take thou like thought for thy salvation.

TUESDAY

THE WITNESS OF JOHN CONCERNING CHRIST.

1. *The Jews sent priests and Levites (to John) . . . to ask him, Who art thou?* John i. 19.

The austerity of John's life, his holiness and zeal had made him a great name. So came men to ask if he were Christ. Seek a great name, and thou findest it not; but from holiness it springeth of its own accord. But if thou wouldest be holy, thou wilt find profit in often asking of thyself, *Who art thou?* and answering *I am not the Christ*; yea, in acknowledging thy vileness, and thinking and speaking of thyself with lowliness. Humility is the foundation of holiness.

2. *What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not.* John i. 21.

John could have claimed the name both of Elias and of that prophet, for Christ had owned in him *the spirit of Elias* and called him *more than a prophet*: yet could he equally refuse such titles, and therefore chose that way of answering which tended towards contempt. Such is the rule of true humility. How dost thou keep this rule! What said John of himself? *I am the voice*. And what sayest thou? Thou callest thyself, peradventure, a thing of nought, yet wouldest not be believed, nor believest it thyself, and coverest thy pride under a cloke of humility. Be confounded then, and henceforth *let not the foot of pride come against thee* (Psalm xxxvi. 11).

3. *Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ. . . . He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.* John i. 25.

He breaketh forth into the praise of Christ, and so doeth honour to Him in putting honour from himself. Contrast thyself and John. What a miser art thou in giving praise to others, as though thou didst lose from thine own store what thou spendest on another's desert! How covetous to gain it for thyself, though thou deservest none! Yea, how readily dost thou neglect God's honour to procure thine own!

WEDNESDAY

THE SECOND WITNESS OF JOHN CONCERNING CHRIST.

1. *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* John i. 29.

Being at once both Prophet and Apostle, saith S. Cyril, he announceth his presence whose advent he

had foretold. Being His appointed forerunner he seizeth on the first occasion for proclaiming Christ. Ah, if thou likewise wouldest suffer no occasion to pass by of shewing Him forth to thy neighbour and lauding Him by word and deed! Hope thou for this: yet it may only be if *Jesus Himself come unto thee* by His grace, without which thou canst do nothing, and thou *see*, and mark Him, and take the opportunity. Pray Him that this may come to pass.

2. *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* John i. 29.

Ponder each word of this his testimony. (1) *Lamb* he calleth Him, to remind them of that saying, *I was like a lamb . . . that is brought to the slaughter* (Jeremiah xi. 19). (2) *The Lamb of God*, as shewing forth His Divinity. (3) *Which taketh away the sin of the world*: whereby he setteth forth the end wherefore He hath come. Consider the gentleness, patience, obedience of this Lamb. See how thou mayest follow His steps and offer thyself also unto Him for a victim. Be joyful with the world and in thyself for that He taketh sin away. Set all thy hope on Him. *Behold.* Have Him more often in thy mind, and when occasion serveth display Him to thy neighbours.

3. *And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.* John i. 34.

(John) *came for a witness, to bear witness.* He saw, and testified: *This is the Son of God.* Learn thou to bear testimony of thy neighbour. (1) *See*: take note of his virtues, not of his defects. (2) When thou hast occasion, praise him, and not thyself. Say *I knew . . . not the virtue that is in him*: he is strong; I am weak. *This is the Son of God*, because the Spirit of God is on him, but on me the spirit of the vanity of this world.

THURSDAY

THE THIRD WITNESS OF JOHN, BEARING THE FRUIT OF NEW DISCIPLES.

1. *Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak. And they followed Jesus.* John i. 35—37.

Christ sheweth Himself purposely to give occasion unto John of testifying and likewise unto the disciples of following. So always by grace He preventeth us : but how often we refuse to hear ! John maketh use of the occasion : see that thou neglect no opportunity of good. Two only of John's companions are moved to follow. It resteth with God to touch the heart. Out of how many thousands hath God had regard unto thee ! Do thou own the blessing of thy vocation, and give Him thanks, and fear to fail of His good purposes.

2. *Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi . . . where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see.* John i. 38, 39.

(1) Mark well the grace of Christ who turneth Him to look upon them. Without such grace where wouldest thou be? Unto thee He putteth the question, "What seekest thou?" inviting thee to make Him the object of thy search. (2) Accosting Him as *Master* the disciples reveal their longing to learn of Him. Who is thy master? The world : thine own evil affections. Depart from them and enrol thyself in the school of Christ. So live that in the hour of death thou mayest hear Christ's voice inviting thee to *come and see* Him through eternity.

3. *They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day.* John i. 39.

Without delay they accept the invitation. What will they find but utter poverty and lack of comfort? Thou mayest not seek Jesus in abundance of consolations. Ponder the sweetness of their converse all that night, and how the disciples marked and savoured all His words. Shame on thy quick fatigue over the things of God, insomuch that it is tedious to thee to spend with Him one short hour! Thou must not seek the savour of Jesus in sensible devotion, yet shalt thou have true devotion if thou abide with Him. To be quickly satisfied is a sure token of lukewarmness.

FRIDAY

ANDREW BRINGETH PETER UNTO CHRIST : PHILIP IS CALLED.

1. *He (Andrew) first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias.* John i. 41.

Lo the fruit of converse with Christ! he knoweth Him for the Messias; rejoiceth that he hath found Him; is filled with zeal to lead his brother to know Him likewise. If thine experience is contrary thereto, bethink thee that thy spiritual converse with Christ must be but feeble, and make amends therein. How blessed if thou at last mightest *find the Messias!* Having Him thou wouldest have all. So likewise to find Him give thou all.

2. *And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas.* John i. 42.

See Andrew's zeal in bringing Peter unto Christ, and Peter's ready will to come: do they not bring

confusion to thy face? To refuse the call of God is despite to thine own soul. See Peter's heart moved by the sight of Christ. O Jesus, look on me also by thy grace. He named him Peter, that he might prove firm and constant. Thee likewise he named Christian. See that thy deeds be answerable to thy name.

3. *Jesus . . . findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.* John i. 43.

Jesus goeth forth to seek disciples in Galilee, being the rudest and most ignorant part of all Judæa, *that faith in his words should not stand* (as saith S. Chrysostom) *in the wisdom of the world but in the teaching of the Holy Ghost.* It was ever the humble that He chose to do great things. Harken now to the words of His vocation: *Follow me.* Who? and whom? Ah, the honour: to follow Christ! Ah, the fervour it demandeth! Ah, thy sluggish steps!

SATURDAY

NATHANAEL IS BROUGHT UNTO CHRIST BY PHILIP.

1. *Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found . . . Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.* John i. 45, 46.

Having come to know Jesus, Philip would have Him known by others also. He falleth short in loving God that laboureth not to draw others to the love of Him. Nathanael standeth in doubt, believing not that any good thing could come out of Nazareth. Yet Jesus chose the region of Nazareth for His own country: setting His heart on meanness wherever it

might be found. Nothing is so lowly that it shutteth Jesus out. *Come and see.* He biddeth him make trial. They that have tasted God know what He is.

2. *Jesus saw Nathanael . . . and saith . . . Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus . . . said unto him . . . When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.* John i. 47, 48.

Christ might have been offended by this saying of Nathanael that no good thing could come out of Nazareth; yet He excuseth him for his *guileless* sincerity. The followers of Jesus give a good interpretation to what others say, and thus they lose not their peace of mind. Jesus praiseth the candour of Nathanael: *an Israelite indeed.* Can He so say of thee that thou art *indeed without guile?* that thou art a man of God indeed, not in appearance only? Mark finally how Jesus who saw Nathanael afar off seeth thee wherever thou mayest be.

3. *Nathanael answered . . . him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.* John i. 49.

A noble confession! How cometh he to know Him for the Son of God? Because he heard that He had seen him under the fig tree. Thus understood he that He knew the secrets of the heart. See that thou hold fast this faith concerning God, and that thou walk ever as in His sight who seeth all. Concerning Christ he maketh a threefold profession: (1) That He is Master: is He thine? Dost thou hearken to His doctrine and follow it? (2) That He is Son of God: thou too must see thy brother as God's son. (3) That He is King of Israel, King of the sons of God. But dost thou hearken unto His commands?

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE MARRIAGE IN CANA OF GALILEE.

1. *There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and . . . Jesus was called.* John ii. 1, 2.

On this model frame the rules of thy table. (1) Be content with scanty fare like that of this poor bridegroom and bride. (2) Murmur not at deficiency of food or drink: the wine failed at Cana. (3) Bid Jesus and Mary as thy guests to teach thee moderation and sobriety. Next mark what Jesus' Mother did: *And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.* She taketh account of the bridegroom's necessity, and warneth her Son of it. Be thou likewise mindful of others' needs, and lay them before Jesus. *They have no wine* of fervour, zeal, charity, consolation and the like. Ask, that thy prayer may be granted. Jesus saith unto her, *Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.* (1) "*Woman,*" He saith, granting His Mother occasion for the humility which He knew to be ever her delight. (2) He would have us learn that He looked unto the hour appointed of His Father, rather than to His Mother's prayers, and that He will not grant them till that hour be come. Prescribe not unto God the time when He shall help thee. Trust Him: He will be with thee, when His hour is come. Troubles will gall thee less if thou bear them thus with hope and patience.

2. *Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.* John ii. 5.

See how the all-blessed Virgin, accosted as "*Woman,*" not as "*Mother*" by her Son and baulked, it seemed, of her petition, made Him no answer. Art thou not ashamed of thy bitterness at any harsh word? Holding her confidence unshaken

she teacheth thee not to despair because thou art repulsed. Thy task will be to *do whatsoever he saith*. That hope alone is never put to confusion which hath good works for its bulwark.

3. *Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water.* John ii. 7.

He willed to give them wine to supply their need : but willed it not until they had given water. So willeth He to do thee good, yet also that thou contribute somewhat of thine own. *Up to the brim* : for thou on thy part must do all thou canst. Why hast thou so little but because thou hast given so little? Thou hast but little of the wine of consolation because thou hast not filled thy heart with the water of compunction. This wine was warmly praised. *Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine . . . but thou hast kept the good wine until now.* The ways of Christ are not as the ways of the world and of the flesh. They proffer delight for a moment, but afterward bring forth the sour wine of anxious care. But Christ giveth first the bitter draught, and afterward the true consolation of the heart. Choose whether thou wilt : yet remember that it is the latter of the twain that will last for ever.

MONDAY

OF THE CASTING OUT OF THE MERCHANTS FROM THE
TEMPLE.

1. *Jesus . . . found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting.* John ii. 13, 14.

The priests' avarice had brought buying and selling into the Temple under colour of having in readiness all things needed for their sacrifices. Thus they cloked their love of money with a shew of zeal for

the worship of God. So God's sanctuary is made a stable. Thou art *the temple of God* (1 Corinthians iii. 16). How standeth it with thee? Dost thou never cloke the love of thyself with fair professions? Take heed! from that point wherein thou givest way to the love of thyself thy soul beginneth to be made a stable for its passions. If thou findest such beasts within thee, ask thyself if this were not the door whereby they entered, and peradventure even made themselves a home.

2. *And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple.* John ii. 15.

Thus He maketh manifest His authority and putteth forth His power. Alone and of no reputation He dismayeth all that multitude. None dare resist, for they know their Lord behind the scourge. Thou too shouldest know when it is the Lord who layeth the scourge upon thy soul, thy body, thy good name. By holy silence and humble subjection thou mayest proclaim His power. Rejoice; for by this scourge He casteth out evil and earthly longings from the temple of thy soul. Consider likewise His zeal for the glory of God: do thou divert thy zeal from thine own honour to God's glory.

3. *And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.* John ii. 16.

The Jews yielded to His words: they took up their goods and fled all ways. Yet how often hath He said the same to thee: Take hence this passion, this vanity, this affection! yet thou remainest unmoved. How shameful is this! If here thou fearest not the shadow of a scourge, fear its reality hereafter.

TUESDAY

CHRIST'S CONVERSATION WITH NICODEMUS.

1. *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus. . . . The same came to Jesus by night.* John iii. 1, 2.

Moved by that zeal and that authority which Christ manifested against the merchants, he believed that Jesus was more than a man. *For no man, said he, can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.* Behold the marvellous power of zeal to draw to itself even the disdainful. *He came by night,* for fear of the Jews and regard to their opinion—a venial fault in one that as yet knew not Christ. But how shalt thou find excuse, who professest thyself His follower, if thou regardest man's judgment? He that esteemeth men above God shall find himself of low esteem with God.

2. *And said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God.* John iii. 2.

Dost thou likewise believe that Christ has come as thy Teacher? Wherefore then dost thou profit so little by His teaching? Because thou dost not hearken to Him in quietness, but art ever chattering with vanities and earthly desires. What thou hearest thou believest not seriously with lively actual faith. What thou believest thou dost not practise, ever languid when there is duty to do. If thou wilt advance amend such faults.

3. *Jesus answered . . . him, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again. . . .* John iii. 3.

Note the points of Christ's teaching. (1) Baptism by *water and the Spirit*, because of the necessity thereof. (2) The Incarnation: *God so loved the world*; and the Passion: *As Moses lifted up the*

serpent, because these be the two chief motives for loving God and imitating His own love. Set them before thee and inflame thy heart. Mark the docility of Nicodemus. Forthwith he openly professed discipleship of Jesus, and continued steadfast in the same: when the Apostles were scattered abroad, it was he that took down the Lord's body from the cross. If thou lovedst thou wouldest make open profession, in preference to all regard for man; and give no heed to the teaching of the world.

WEDNESDAY

CHRIST INSTRUCTETH NICODEMUS IN THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

1. *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.* John iii. 16.

He teacheth of the Person of the Father, and of His love to theeward: and truly He could have shewn none greater, though He had given Himself on our behalf. All adoration then and thanksgiving be done unto the Father, with owning of His love. Give Him thine own to answer His: surrender to Him all that is dear unto the flesh, yea even to the lofty soul. In thy turn devote to Him all thy powers. It is meet and right. He is the Father; yea, and thy Father, unworthy though thou be.

2. *Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.* John iii. 19.

He teacheth of the Person of the Son under the title of *Light*; inasmuch as He *lighteth every man*, by His celestial doctrine, and the pattern of His whole life. Thou wouldest be a *child of light*: but thy darkness comprehended not this Light by taking thought, or lively faith, or imitation. Nay, peradventure thou preferrest the darkness of this world to Christ's example and His doctrine.

3. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* John iii. 8.

He teacheth of the Person of the Holy Ghost. Believe, confess, adore the Spirit of God: hearken to His voice, as He speaketh to thee through the Scriptures, through all creation, through His own inspirations. All save the unthankful can *tell whence He cometh*, attending to the first motions of His inspirations and of grace: yea, and *whither He goeth*, looking onward to the end whereunto He directeth, and striving to co-operate. But into how deep a flood of thanklessness and misery has thou thrown thyself!

THURSDAY

THE FOURTH WITNESS OF JOHN CONCERNING CHRIST.

1. John's disciples *came unto John, and said unto him . . . he . . . to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.* John iii. 26.

John's disciples are touched by envy, an affection which sometimes invadeth even holy souls. In some sort they seem to place John before Christ, moved thereunto by natural love. If thou lovest aught apart from God thou must needs prefer it unto God, in truth though not in word. Then they go on to aver that all men come to Christ, albeit there were many that still came to John. In the sight of the envious the prosperity of others ever waxeth great; but their own waneth unto nothing. Away with envy! yet covet earnestly the best gifts.

2. *He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice.* John iii. 29.

John is not moved to anger, still less to envy, by his disciples' words. His mind is clean contrary to theirs. Nay, he proclaimeth Christ as Messias and Bridegroom of the Church. He calleth himself His friend, who therefore rejoiceth in His glory. Now how art thou disposed towards thy neighbour's good fame? Art thou satisfied that he should increase, and glad that he should be exalted? Yea verily, such must be thy mind, if thy love for thy friend be truly a Christian's love.

3. *He must increase, but I must decrease.* John iii. 30.

John hath much to say concerning Christ: but in all he hath no aim but this, that Christ may be glorified and he brought low. Behold the two sure foundations of thine endeavours: zeal for God's glory, and humbling of thyself.

FRIDAY

JOHN IS PUT IN PRISON.

1. *Herod . . . had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison.* Mark vi. 17.

John, so lately hailed as Messias, is now a disgraced criminal: doth he murmur or complain? Nay verily: not as thou doest, but as he had ever done, he accepted affliction with humility and joy. Affliction will have no power against thee if thou feel it not: but to attain thus far thou must first be dead unto thyself.

2. *For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.* Mark vi. 18.

That was the reason for his bonds. For a holy action, for zealous admonition of the king, he is haled into prison. Such indeed is often a righteous man's reward: to receive evil for good. Would that thy sufferings came from no other cause and proceeded not from thine own fault! One that so suffereth hath a consolation in his own innocence. Mark the freedom and the modesty of his rebuke. He maketh no reproach, but setteth forth the truth, and that not as from himself, but from the law.

3. *Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly.* Mark vi. 20.

Even in an enemy a man may love and honour virtue. But if Herod be thus well disposed towards John, why doth he cast him into prison? We must assign that to the importunity of the Jews and the supplications of Herodias. Thus, seeking to please men, he departeth from the way of justice. He that looketh unto man cometh to despise God: he that looketh unto God learneth to despise man's favour. Unto whether of the twain wilt thou then look?

SATURDAY

THE CONVERSATION OF CHRIST WITH THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

1. *Jesus . . . being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well.* John iv. 6.

In zeal to save the soul of one, and her a sinner, He endureth weariness, He breaketh off His journey, He awaiteth her in that place whither He surely

knew that she would come. To Christ every soul is of account. Do thou then seek the salvation of them of low estate. It is souls that God looketh unto : not wealth or honours. *He is wearied*, saith S. Ambrose, *in his long seeking after thee also*, yea, seeking thee in all His labours and torments. He sitteth : He waiteth ; why delayest thou to draw nigh—nay, turnest thee away?

2. *There cometh a woman of Samaria . . . and Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.* John iv. 7.

O happy woman, to come when Jesus waited for her ! Sometimes neglected opportunity is the very root of misery. If thou wouldest give thy mind to this, how wouldest thou shew thyself attentive to God's gifts of grace ! He asketh little that He may give much, even the water that springeth up into everlasting life. So is it ever with God : thou givest Him a little ; He giveth thee much. Give then thy very little gifts. From faithfulness in a very little there springeth abundant reward : but carelessness in that which is least may plunge thee into the abyss of sin.

3. *The woman . . . saith unto him . . . How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?* John iv. 9.

Consider her churlishness towards Christ, and ours. We deny to Him what we should be ashamed to refuse to our enemy. How often is He athirst and asketh thee nothing but that which concerneth thy salvation, and thou deniest it ! Consider how greatly Christ thirsteth for thy salvation, inasmuch as His love exceedeth the hatred of the devil. And to such love, such thirst canst thou deny anything, when thou rememberest that the final reward is thine own?

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE WOMAN IS CONVERTED, AND PREACHETH CHRIST
TO THE SAMARITANS.

1. *Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him.* John iv. 10.

The woman knoweth not the gift of the very presence of God, nor what it is that He asketh of her. Therefore she asketh not yet the *living water* for herself. The benefit of salvation dependeth wholly on this same presence of God. If thou wouldest but think on that presence, wouldest thou not be more fervent in His service? Wouldest thou not put more restraint on thine affections? Thus He leadeth her on to learn more fully of Messiah, and of the worship of God in spirit and in truth, and moveth her to hate her former life. So He preventeth and welcometh us. But (saith S. Austin) *He who made thee without thine aid will not so save thee.*

2. *Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.* John iv. 15.

Behold the fruit of converse with Christ. Desire for the celestial water is kindled within her: the revealing of her secret sins leadeth her to acknowledge Messiah: the sinner becometh an apostle; she leaveth her water-pot, runneth into the city, biddeth all men come to Christ. *Come, see.* See thou, and imitate the progress of her soul. Stir up desire for the water of grace; ask it with reverence; leave the water-pot of thy former conversation; rejoice that thou hast found Jesus; bend thy care to the drawing of others unto Him.

3. *In the mean time his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them. . . . My*

meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. John iv. 31, 34.

In this passage, saith S. Chrysostom, he speaketh of man's salvation as his meat, to shew how great is the care and desire that possesseth him for our salvation. For by such care He fulfilled the Father's will. Likewise He longeth for thy salvation: therefore thou also art His meat. O wondrous grace, which thou must imitate, that obedience may be thy meat also. What is there, saith S. Bernard, like unto the doing of God's will to give comfort and support in every necessity? Let zeal for souls be thy meat. Remember, as S. Austin testifieth, that thou art guilty of the ruin of any soul that thou couldest save, and wouldest not.

MONDAY

CHRIST HEALETH THE NOBLEMAN'S SON.

1. *When he (the nobleman) heard that Jesus was come . . . he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.* John iv. 47.

When adversity cometh upon us we run to Christ. For that reason God sendeth it upon us, which teacheth us to bear it the more easily. Let thy care for the health of thy soul be like that of this father for the bodily health of his son. *Is not the life of the soul more than that of the body?* (Matthew vi. 25). The nobleman hath but imperfect faith. Let thine be nearer to perfection. Make thy request: but leave all else unto Christ's disposal. In temptation tarry not till thou be *at the point of death* before thou have recourse to Christ. Seek Him betimes. The deferring of the remedy addeth strength to the disease.

2. *Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.* John iv. 48.

He rebuketh his little faith, that so He may dispose him unto greater and so heal his soul. Such is Christ's goodness, which will give us more than we ask if only we ourselves hinder Him not. The nobleman persevereth in his prayer: *Come down, ere my child die.* He erreth in supposing that the Lord's power can ever be too late. Jesus giveth him consolation: *Thy son liveth.* His words are true: but more than that; they are effectual. Would that He might so say to me, *Thy soul liveth!* The nobleman *believed.* For that Christ tarried. If He defer to answer thy request, it is for thy good.

3. *Himself believed, and his whole house.* John iv. 53.

He heard from his servants that his son revived at the same hour in which Jesus spoke the words: *and himself believed.* Then came he into the house, looked about him, and made known the words of Jesus. Then *his whole house believed.* The master of the house of thy soul is thine understanding of such truths as lead to action: on that depend thy will, thine appetite, and thine affections. Remove from thine understanding the false principles of the world and the flesh: nourish it with the principles of God; but not for the sake of knowledge but of deed.

TUESDAY

PETER FISHETH AT THE LAKE OF GENNESARETH.

1. *He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people out of the ship.* Luke v. 3.

(1) From the people that *pressed upon him* learn how earnestly thou must long to know the things of God. (2) If Christ be sitting in that ship which is thine heart, thou must thrust out from the land of earthly affections. The love of God and the love of this world can never mingle. (3) Then will He *sit down* and master thine heart and all its affections: He will teach those eternal truths which thou canst never receive while thou still cleavest unto earthly things.

2. *Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.* Luke v. 4.

(1) Jesus, not content that thou withdraw but a little from earthly things, saith to thee, *Launch out into the deep*: go on unto what is more perfect; there ever remaineth somewhat further for thee to attain. *Launch out into the deep*: thy high intent will bear thee up. (2) Peter answered, *We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing.* That truly is the whole result of toil for honours and like: *nothing*. And for this nothing how much toil! for Him who is everything how little!

3. *At thy word I will let down the net. And . . . they inclosed a great multitude of fishes.* Luke v. 5, 6.

(1) Yea, though hitherto in that very place they had taken nothing. Wherefore? Because now the net was thrown in the name of Jesus and out of obedience. No act performed with such intentions is worthless in the sight of God. (2) This was the answer of Christ unto Peter, forasmuch as he had received Him into the ship and left the land. How lavish a reward God bestoweth on thy smallest service! (3) This was done to teach them that His followers would never lack what was necessary for life. Away then with all this care for thy body: be anxious for nothing but to follow Jesus.

WEDNESDAY

THE CALL OF PETER AND ANDREW, JAMES AND JOHN.

1. *Jesus saw two brethren, Simon . . . and Andrew And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.* Matthew iv. 18, 19.

Whom calleth He? and whence? and whereunto? They be plain and simple men that be called of Him: for lowliness is ever pleasing unto Him and the aptest soil for every grace. They be brethren: and *thus he shewed* (as saith a spiritual writer) *that it was his will that all his disciples should be joined together in love.* Such must they be that would catch souls. How standest thou herein? He calleth them from the mean labours of the sea. Thee also hath He called away from the sea of this world wherein thou wast casting thy nets of concupiscence for the catching of earthly benefits. Pay thy tribute to the grace of God. He calleth thee to *follow* Him, that so following thou mayest have Him ever before thine eyes, mayest see His footsteps and walk in them, and fish for men as zealously as He. Behold the high honour of thy task! Behold thine own unworthiness! But after what manner dost thou pursue thy calling?

2. *And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.* Matthew iv. 20

Their ready obedience rebuketh thy false excuses. *They leave their nets.* What be thy nets that hinder thy following of Jesus? Friendships of this world, business that appertaineth not to thy vocation, evil affections. If thou wilt follow Jesus, thou must forsake all that savoureth not of Him.

3. *He saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John . . . in a ship . . . mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.* Matthew iv. 21, 22.

He commended the unity of brotherly love. So saith the commentator. So likewise S. Bernard: There is no difference of judgment, no hesitation, no care for their livelihood, no delay; they follow. Their obedience, it seemeth is yet more blind than their fellows': for to them He saith no further word to throw light upon the task whereto He calleth them. Yea, moreover, these twain leave their father at the call of Christ. Consider thine own obedience, whether it be, like theirs, blind, and immediate, and regardless of all other love.

THURSDAY

A MAN POSSESSED BY AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT IS HEALED.

1. *There was in the synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. Mark i. 23.*

Unhappy the lot of one possessed by a devil! If thou wert so possessed bodily what wouldest thou not do to be set free? Yet in thy soul and its evil affections thou harbourst a devil, and carest not at all. *He cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?* The shameless fiend denieth Christ's dominion over His own creation. So soon as a man falleth into sin, straightway the fiend claimeth dominion over him. But Jesus who came to *destroy the works of the devil* permitteth it not. *Art thou come to destroy us? Christ's presence is torment to the devils,* saith S. Jerome. The torment of a devil is to be cast from out thy heart. Up then: assault thy foe as if thou couldest see him face to face.

2. *I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. Mark i. 24.*

The fiend approacheth Christ with praise and adulation, seeking to avoid expulsion, or peradventure to taint Him with the breath of vainglory.

If sinners entice thee, consent thou not (Proverbs i. 10). *Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him* (Mark i. 25). Christ took no pleasure in praise in the mouth of a sinner. That thou mayest offer worthy praise take heed to thy mouth and to thy heart.

3. *When the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.* Mark i. 26.

At that one word of Christ, *Come out*, the fiend departed; wherefore after so many an inspiration departeth he not from thee? The fault is thine. Self-indulgence maketh thee too tender with him. Hear the words of S. Gregory: *While he had him in possession he tare him not, but as he departed he tare him: for oftentimes the devil maketh increase of temptation even in that moment when he is being driven forth.* [Be not cast down therefore if thy temptations gather strength: this is a token that the devil is departing from thee.]

FRIDAY

SIMON'S WIFE'S MOTHER IS HEALED OF A FEVER.

1. *And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever.* Luke iv. 38.

In such case Jesus found her. How findeth He thee at His coming? Peradventure thy fever is not one but many. Hear S. Ambrose: *In my judgment, saith he, there is a fever of love for the creature as malignant as the fever of the heated body: the fevers that afflict our souls are avarice, lust, ambition, anger.* Own thy sickness and the danger that encompasseth thee. Hitherto thou hast shut out Jesus from the house of thy heart: now let Him in, that by His grace and His instruction thou mayest be healed.

2. *And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her.* Mark i. 31.

There is no hope that thy soul may be in health unless God stretch forth to thee the hand of His grace. But how often stretcheth He it forth, and thou takest it not! *He . . . rebuked the fever; and it left her* (Luke iv. 39). Thou knowest God's will and commandment as concerning these thy fevers; yet hitherto they leave thee not. Wherefore? Because while thou loathest the fever of the body thou lovest the fevers of thy soul. Stand then in dread of the sentence of God. *We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed; forsake her* (Jeremiah li. 9). Ah, forsake her.

3. *And immediately she arose and ministered unto them.* Luke iv. 39.

(1) When God in His sole power is the Healer all returneth at once to its perfection. But in the present order of nature one thing followeth another according to the measure of our co-operation. [Thou wouldest fain have thy passions in subjection, but with no labour of thine own. All such longings are fruitless unless thou put thy hand to the work.] (2) Her bodily power being restored, straightway she putteth it at Christ's service, and *ministereth*. Gratitude demanded no less. Now in whose service usest thou thy health and strength?

SATURDAY

THREE WHO WOULD FOLLOW CHRIST, BUT NOT AS THEY SHOULD DO.

1. *A certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.* Luke ix. 57.

(1) No words could be fairer, had this man's

intention matched with them. But it was for his own advantage that he wished to follow. Therefore the Lord, having nowhere to lay His head, refuseth him. As S. Hierome saith : *Wherefore wouldest thou follow me for riches and worldly gain, when I have not a cottage for thine entertainment?* In the first place therefore learn not to distort the duties thou owest unto God to such base ends as thine own vain-glory and advantage. (2) Thou shouldest imitate Christ's poverty by depriving thyself of superfluity. (3) He hath no place to lay His head. Offer Him then thy heart ; so it be clean and soft.

2. *And he said unto another, Follow me ; but he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.* Luke ix. 59.

The Lord refuseth him, saying *Let the dead bury their dead.* To bury his father was a duty : but even such duties are to be abandoned at the call of God or of obedience ; yea, at His own behest we must abandon God Himself ; for the one measure of perfection is the will of God.

3. *And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee ; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.* Luke ix. 61.

(1) This also the Lord refuseth, saying, *No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.* In the matter of His service He will have us take no counsel of those at home, that is of our affections : such counsel bringeth in both danger and delay. (2) He that will follow Christ let him direct his affection and longing onward and upward, not back to earthly things ; since no man may face both ways.

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE TEMPEST OF THE SEA IS CALMED.

1. *When Jesus was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.* Matthew viii. 23.

The true disciple leaveth not his master in time of hardness. *And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea.* Even in the companionship of Christ temptation and affliction will come. Therefore, though thou be in grace, be vigilant: yet the Lord is with thee, therefore faint not. *But he was asleep.* Mark well the firmness of His heart: asleep in the storm!

2. *And his disciples came to him.* Matthew viii. 25.

Behold thy place of refuge when thou art hard pressed. *And awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.* Herein was a double sin. (1) Lack of faith. They believe not that though sleeping He can save. (2) Disturbance of the mind through fear. Therefore He reproveth them, saying, *Why are ye fearful?* Contrariwise in every temptation trust thou in God's providence: and keep thy serenity; a mind disturbed ever clutcheth at expedients that be either profitless or harmful.

3. *Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea.* Matthew viii. 26.

First the winds, as cause of the commotion, and afterward the sea. If thou wilt destroy evil, strike first at its root and cause. *And said unto the sea, Peace, be still* (Mark iv. 39). When thou art disturbed in mind, *Peace, be still*; lest thou break forth into murmuring, complaining, indignation. How often hath God so said to thee! how seldom hast thou obeyed Him! *And there was a great calm.* The swift obedience of insensate creatures putteth thee to shame.

MONDAY

A LEGION OF DEVILS IS CAST OUT.

1. *There met him two possessed of devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce.* Matthew viii. 28.

S. Mark (v. 3, 5) and S. Luke (viii. 29) describe their misery more fully : *And no man could bind him, no, not with chains . . . he was in the mountains . . . crying, and cutting himself with stones: and ware no clothes.* Such treatment doth the devil mete to man : yet he that loveth sin loveth the devil. The lightest sin is an evil worse than any pain thou canst imagine : yet to save thyself from the lightest pain, thou shrinkest not from sin. Thou breakest the bands of the laws of God : thou tearest open the garment of grace.

2. *But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him.* Mark v. 6.

The very devils put thee to shame. The presence of Jesus putteth them in dread : and to that same presence thou fearest not to do despite. Further they cry, *I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not* by casting me out. Thou seest how their strange hate for man maketh them long to tempt him. How great then thy need of circumspection ! Being asked *What is thy name?* he answereth *Legion*. When one entereth in, he bringeth his companions after him. One passion unsubdued stirreth up many another. One sin committed draweth thee on to others.

3. *So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.* Matthew viii. 31.

Behold how straitly limited is their power ! They cannot even take possession of a swine. How much less will they have power against thee, unless thy will assent ! Such a petition sheweth how low once noble

spirits have fallen by sin. Jesus granted their request. So teacheth He the worth of a soul. Liberation from the devil's yoke is cheaply bought by any temporal loss: so therefore by any loss of honours or advantage.

TUESDAY

AT THE REQUEST OF THE GADARENES CHRIST
DEPARTETH.

1. *And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind.* Mark v. 15.

Such is the state of man now delivered from sin. He *sitteth*, in marvellous peace of mind: *at the feet of Jesus*, in humility; *clothed* in grace and the supernatural gifts; *in his right mind*, master of the passions whereby he was distraught. Compare his former with his latter state: pray for a like conversion for thyself; and, that thou mayest persevere therein, depart not from the feet of Jesus.

2. *And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.* Mark v. 17.

The loss of the swine, saith Cajetan, *made them apprehensive of further loss.* Fearing the sacrifice of temporal goods they chose to be deprived of Christ, the greatest evil that can be. Ah madness! Hold thou to Him, and let Him not depart. The sacrifice of thy life and thy blood is but great gain if thou canst keep Jesus for thine own.

3. *And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed of the devil prayed him that he might be with him.* Mark v. 18.

It was the gift of grace that roused in him this longing. How often have I had this gift, yet still have

I not this longing to cleave to God! *Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.* He rejecteth him not, but sendeth him to proclaim the benefit conferred: and to whom? Even to them that were praying Him to depart: and wherefore? that even so they might acknowledge Jesus and believe on Him. O goodness of Jesus! He seeketh them by whom He is rejected. How often hath He so sought thee! And what owest thou to His great goodness?

WEDNESDAY

ONE SICK OF THE PALSY IS BROUGHT UNTO CHRIST.

1. *And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.* Mark ii. 3.

Sad was the man's condition; but sadder the state of the lukewarm soul, whose hands be too infirm to work, and its feet (which are its affections) too weak to move. Hast thou sometimes found thyself in like case? Yea, would that such were not thy case even now! Wilt thou be made whole? Then summon these four to bear thee: the knowledge of thine own misery; the knowledge of God's goodness; and, in consequence, the hope of salvation, and the love of God. With these to carry thee thy soul's healing is assured.

2. *And they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude.* Luke v. 18, 19.

There was no way into the house because of the multitude: yet by means of those four the sick of the palsy sought a way on every side. He doth what he

can, lest the occasion pass him by. Do thou the like in the affairs of thy soul. Put not off till to-morrow what thou canst do to-day. Though sometimes there seemeth to be a real impediment, reason requireth thee to seek to force a way.

3. *They uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.* Mark ii. 4.

Mark how these bearers persevere in their charity towards the sick, and do thou the like. Thou mayest consider also the same virtue in the master of the house who forbiddeth not the breaking up of the tiling of the room wherein Christ preached. Likewise the palsied man shrinketh not from being thought rude and importunate, nor is he ashamed to display his infirmities before men. So much is effected by desire for wholeness of the body. And shall not desire for sanctity effect yet greater things? Make then a generous resolution.

THURSDAY

THE SAME PALSIED MAN IS HEALED BY CHRIST.

1. *And Jesus seeing their faith saith unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer.* Matthew ix. 2.

(1) O words of love, that might soften a heart of stone! *Thy sins be forgiven thee.* Not this, but bodily healing, was the boon he craved. By taking care first for the soul's malady Jesus sheweth how that is the greater. How blind art thou not to understand this! And therefore thou takest heed for the healing of thy body more than of thy soul. (2) The cause of sicknesses and afflictions is sin: therefore to cure the sickness He taketh away its cause. Thou art no skilful healer of the soul's maladies unless thou pluck out the passion which is the root thereof.

2. *But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies?* Mark ii. 6, 7.

There will always be some that put an evil interpretation on thy holy actions : some that cover envy with a cloke of zeal. If thou be such, take to thyself Christ's rebuking of the scribes : *Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?* (Matthew ix. 4). Shame on thee ! and, that thou henceforth make no such judgments, remember that as Jesus saw their thoughts, so He seeth all of thine, whether they be good or bad.

3. *(Then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.* Matthew ix. 6.

Here be three things for thee to do, when thou art set free from the palsy of thy soul, lest thou relapse. (1) *Arise*, by generous resolves, which thou must oft renew. (2) *Take up thy bed*, that is to say (as one here noteth) raise up thy flesh from carnal appetites to conformity with the true will of the spirit. (3) *Go unto the house* of conscience, and dwell therein.

FRIDAY

WHAT FOLLOWED AFTER THE HEALING OF THE PALSIED MAN.

1. *And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him because he had done these things on the sabbath day.* John v. 16.

Under the cloke of religion they reveal their malice. Jesus hath wrought a good work and they reward him with persecution. I am sure of persecution if I shew goodness among the froward. Ah, if I could but protect and comfort myself as Christ did ! *My Father worketh hitherto* (yea, even on this sabbath day) *and I work* : that is to say, I work the

works of My Father. But woe is me! this I cannot say. The savour of the world and the flesh is upon my works. No more of this! Henceforth will I work with and in my Father: let Him be my aim, my power, my motive.

2. *Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him because he . . . said that God was his Father.* John v. 18.

To what have we now come? By the very observance of our rule of life, by the works whereby we deserve the name of the sons of God, we incur the hatred of the froward. How happy were I if the only reason for men's hatred were that God is my Father, and that I do those things which please the Father! O my God, I am willing to endure the hate of men; but let it be only for this cause that I am Thy son, and Thou my Father.

3. *The . . . works that I do bear witness of me.* John v. 36.

Christ giveth proof of His Godhead: He citeth the witness of John, but dependeth not thereon; for He addeth greater and stronger witness, even those works of His, which *none other man* can do. If I would enter into glory I must one day prove myself a son of God at His judgment seat. What witness shall I bring? No human praise will then avail me when each man's works are reckoned up. What if *thy works be not found perfect?* What must thou now do that in that day *thine own works may praise thee in the gates?* (Proverbs xxxi. 31).

SATURDAY

THE CALL OF MATTHEW.

1. *As Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man.* Matthew ix. 9.

God saw him, saith S. Chrysostom, that he might

see God. Learn then that thou canst not know God unless He shew Himself to thee by His grace. See me then, O Jesus, that I may see Thee. *Sitting at the receipt of custom*, as one that took his ease amidst temporal gain. Ah, the deceitfulness of such an ease! *Named Matthew*: it is the evangelist that setteth down his own name to make us know his unworthiness and God's condescension. *And he saith unto him.* Even while thou art set in sinfulness, yea, in the very act of sin, God speaketh to thine heart: how often thou feignest deafness! *And he . . . followed him*, and that without delay, for Jesus was passing on. Grace cometh and goeth again: it passeth from thee unless thou lay hold on it. *He left all* (Luke v. 28). To one that knoweth God all else becometh worthless.

2. *And Levi made him a great feast.* Luke v. 29.

This was to testify his gratitude and joy, and likewise to use the occasion to draw other men to Christ. For there was there *a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.* Art thou thus grateful towards God? Dost thou seek opportunities of good? See how Christ disdaineth not his table, though by thus keeping company with sinners He might lose repute; inasmuch as here was an occasion whereby more might be converted. [Dost thou thus seek thy neighbour's salvation even if it seem to cost thee thy good name?]

3. *And . . . the Pharisees . . . said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?* Matthew ix. 11.

Give praise to Jesus that He occupieth Himself with sinners: else where wouldest thou be? Praise Him for that He not only eateth with sinners but giveth Himself to be eaten of them. So much He honoureth thee, thou man of nought! Murmur not: put no ill interpretation on another's acts. Thou canst not know what he intendeth.

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

A WOMAN IS HEALED OF AN ISSUE OF BLOOD.

1. *A certain woman which had an issue of blood twelve years . . . and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered.* Mark v. 25, 26.

Her bodily affliction kindleth within her the longing for betterment: in her sickness she learneth to value wholeness; she spendeth all that she can lay her hand to, and would give more if she had more. But how far more urgent the wholeness of the soul! Learn then to value that: if thou hast it, take heed thou lose it not; to this end apply all the faculties of thine inner being, thy intellect, thy memory, thy will: but if thou hast it not, kindle a longing for it. Yet longing sufficeth not: apply thy faculties.

2. *When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.* Mark v. 27.

This she did with humility, with reverence, with lively faith that so she might be made whole. In this wise thou must come to the Eucharist. Let not the press of ill affections hinder thee. Thrust it aside that so thou mayest draw near. He asketh, *Who touched me?* (Luke viii. 45). Not for information asketh He, for He knoweth all things: but that the woman might shew her faith, that others might receive light, and that faith might bring forth in her the fruit of other virtues. Learn then to grow in holiness, and thus fulfil the will of Christ for thee.

3. *But the woman fearing and trembling.* Mark v. 33.

She looked for a reproach for her defiling touch: and thou, defiled by thy many passions, fearest thou not, when it is thine not to touch the border of His garment but to take His Divine Nature into thyself?

Came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth, concerning her malady, humbled and ashamed before all the people. Mark well her progress from faith to confession of her own defects and acceptance of public humiliation. And hast thou yet not progressed thus far? But He said, Daughter, be of good cheer. When she humbleth herself straightway she is called Daughter. To have Jesus for thy Father is worth humiliation. Thy faith hath made thee whole. If thou failest, be sure that it is from thy little faith. Accustom thyself therefore to frequent acts of faith, more especially in God and the Divine attributes.

MONDAY

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER IS RAISED UP.

1. *Behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. Matthew ix. 18.*

(1) His only daughter, of noble rank, of tender age, lieth dead. Trust not to youth. Death is all around thee, and peradventure this day is thy last. Lord, thou knowest my foolishness. If thou knowest that at such a time I shall commit sin, yea, in this very moment, snatch me away, though it be by a thunder-bolt. (2) If thou fall, have recourse unto God, *even now*, at this moment. To wish to defer penance is to wish to add sin to sin.

2. *And when He came . . . and saw . . . the people making a noise, he said unto them, Give place. Matthew ix. 23.*

When Christ draweth nigh all that is of the world must give place. The healing of the soul can never be completed unless thou cast out the multitude of thy passions. Therefore whenever thou hast occasion,

thou must firmly say unto thy passions, *Give place*. Then He addeth, *The maid is not dead, but sleepeth*. Peradventure He hath in mind them that dedicate themselves to God in their youth. To the world they die; but such a death is but a taking of rest in sweet sleep, while they forsake the world and the lusts thereof. But if such lusts be still alive in thee, then art thou not yet dead unto the world, but sleepest for a time, like fire that smouldereth within the ashes.

3. *And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise.* Luke viii. 54.

Thou fallest by thine own sole act, but canst not rise up again but by the helping hand of God. Acknowledge thy weakness: lay hold upon the strength of grace. *And her spirit came again*. But how often hath He said to thee, *Arise*, and thy spirit hath not come again! It accordeth not with reason that a disembodied soul should obey God and one embodied should refuse the like obedience. For *whether we live . . . or die, we are the Lord's* (Romans xiv. 8). Let not God complain concerning thee, *How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?*

TUESDAY

CHRIST RESTORETH SIGHT UNTO TWO THAT ARE BLIND.

1. *And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying . . . Thou son of David, have mercy on us.* Matthew ix. 27.

Blind in their bodily eyes, but not in those of the spirit: for by faith they acknowledge Messias, believe in His power, hope for His mercy. Peradventure it is thou rather that art blind of heart, so long as thine ill desires cloud thine eyes and hinder thee from

seeing the way of Christ and understanding His high and holy teaching. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit* (1 Corinthians ii. 14). *Thou . . . knowest not that thou art wretched . . . and blind* (Revelation iii. 17).

2. *Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.* Matthew ix. 28.

All along the way Jesus gave them no answer : yet went they on following and crying. Thou too must follow Jesus, though thou find no consolation. Wait upon the Lord with patience and endurance. Mark this also that He asketh, not to enlighten ignorance but because He would have men acknowledge the greatness of His power. To think high thoughts of God is the true fount of noble deeds.

3. *Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.* Matthew ix. 29.

A man's disposition the measure whereby Christ measureth grace. Thus mayest thou understand the reason for thy poverty in grace : thy heart is but half disposed thereto. Now henceforth strive to dispose thyself more fully. When He had healed them, *he straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.* It was more than a command ; He would teach us, as by a parable, to wish that concealed which would obtain for us the approbation of the multitude. Christ would have no praise. Thou canst do nothing without Him : why then dost thou desire it?

WEDNESDAY

A DUMB DEVIL IS CAST OUT.

1. *They brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out the dumb spake.* Matthew ix. 32, 33.

Great was the charity of them that brought him : but greater the loving-kindness of God. Follow thou the one : marvel at the other. Doth vainglory hinder thee from speaking of God ; the fear of men from speaking for Him ; the mind's hankering for the creature from speaking with Him ? Then art thou also dumb.

2. *The multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.* Matthew ix. 33.

Their hearts, sincere and uncorrupt, withheld not praise for the good deeds they saw with their eyes. *But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.* Envy ever discoloureth what is another's. Good speech dependeth on good disposition of the mind. Jesus is called a wizard : He holdeth His peace and answereth not again : if thou ponder this, why should detracting words move thee to indignation ?

3. *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages ; teaching in their synagogues . . . and healing every sickness.* Matthew ix. 35.

Behold how He replied to their injurious speech ! He continued to multiply good deeds and miracles on their behalf. Cease not from good because of detraction. If thou didst not begin on their account, on their account leave not off. [Look unto Him whose servant thou art, and resolve to care not at all if thou please not men.]

THURSDAY

HE FINDETH THE IMPOTENT MAN AT THE POOL.

1. *There lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.* John v. 3.

Here hast thou a type of the sicknesses of the soul.

The impotent are they that care not to advance along the path of virtue : the blind are they that lift not their eyes to the things of eternity but cling to the darkness of that which perisheth : the halt are they that turn themselves either way, now to God, now to this world ; the withered are they that by their own fault taste not the savour of devotion. See if thou canst not find thyself among this multitude. How much patience and watchfulness is stirred within them by their longing for healing of their bodies as they wait for the moving of the water ! Would that thou hadst the like longing for the healing of thy soul, and the like watchfulness to seek a remedy !

2. *Whosoever . . . first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole.* John v. 4.

How close and how unceasing was each one's watchfulness for the troubling of the water ! How sharp the struggle as they hasted to step in ! Yet only the first was healed, not the most grievously afflicted, nor he that had waited longest, but the first and the most eager. [See then what is requisite for the healing of thy soul ; first, watchfulness for the inspirations of God, the troubling of the water, the stirring of thine affections ; then eager diligence in doing thine own part.] See then if thou be lacking herein, and see how deeply thou lackest.

3. *A certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him . . . he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?* John v. 5.

Christ did not doubt this man's will, but looked unto thy soul's infirmities, which cannot be cured unless thou wilt. So then it is of thee that the question is asked whether indeed thou wilt : for it is the will that putteth all else into operation. *Wilt thou?* or dost thou merely wish? If thou wilt, why dost thou spurn the means? If thou wilt be cured of pride, why avoidest thou humiliation?

FRIDAY

CHRIST HEALETH THIS IMPOTENT MAN.

1. *The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool.* John v. 7.

Saith he so with murmuring and reprobation of the attendants for hastening to aid the rich and leaving him in his misery? or doth he in simplicity make known his wretched case? Take heed that thou give neither this cause nor that to superior, nor to subject, nor to pupil that he should say *I have no man*. Remember that in the miseries of thine own soul thou needest not so to make complaint: *Behold the Man*, thine own Jesus, who putteth thee into the pool of His own Blood.

2. *Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.* John v. 8.

Here hast thou the three remedies for spiritual impotence. (1) *Rise*. Tarry not for the sole power of grace to lift thee up: thou must thyself co-operate. (2) *Take up thy bed* of lusts and passions. Take them up: away with them, away with them, crucify them. Take them up into thy two hands of reason and will, the hands which erstwhile lay passive on that bed. (3) *Walk*: yea, go from strength to strength, with eager longing to go forward.

3. *Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.* John v. 14.

He recalleth that blessing to his mind: He warneth him against sin; He threateneth punishment. Here be three considerations to restrain thine imperfections and draw thee to fervour of spirit: that love wherewith God blesseth thee; His commandment; and the penalty that followeth on disobedience.

SATURDAY

CHRIST MAKETH EXCUSE FOR THE DISCIPLES WHEN
THEY PLUCK THE EARS OF CORN.

1. *Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.* Matthew xii. 1.

Consider the life of Christ and His disciples, so austere that they were reduced to such an hunger. They had no such dishes made ready for them as thou hast, no, not a loaf of bread. *Marvel*, saith S. Chrysostom, *at their little care for the needs of the body, and at their perseverance none the less in their discipleship.* The presence of Christ supplied every deficiency and seasoned that which had no flavour. Think upon this, and thou wilt convert thy bodily solicitude into spiritual; nor will any lack of food or comfort lead thee to impatience or murmuring and so sever thee from Christ.

2. *But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which it is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.* Matthew xii. 2.

Behold how they watch Him, seeking to charge Him with wrongdoing and to detract from that honour which by His miracles He had won. Envy is cloked by zeal for the integrity of the law. Would they but look within themselves they would find worse offences committed on the sabbath day. Moles to their own faults, lynxes to those of others, on the least excuse they find a cause for blame. Seest thou the shame of one that watcheth others and taketh no thought of himself? [When thou observest the mote in thy brother's eye, turn thou thy thoughts towards the beam that is in thine own]

3. *But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungred . . . how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread?* Matthew xii. 3, 4.

S. Luke recordeth that the disciples also themselves were taxed with wrongdoing. They held their peace : therefore their Master undertook their defence. If thou wilt make answer to every unjust word or calumny, thou wilt find thyself exposed to much that causeth yet more suffering : but if thou hold thy peace, the word of God will speak on thy behalf. He careth for His own : [He may suffer them to be oppressed but not crushed.] Such is the hope to cherish in my heart.

THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE WITHERED HAND IS HEALED.

1. *Behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?* Matthew xii. 10.

Thus they asked, that, if He so affirmed, *they might accuse him* before the rulers, but, if He said Nay, they might traduce Him to the people as one that had no pity. Thus there was peril either way : but to destroy their error He electeth to perform a cure upon the sabbath. What wouldest thou do for the truth if thou foresawest suffering involved therein? Fear not the countenance of man. Do what is just and right with zeal and discretion ; and leave it to heaven to protect thee. In that *withered hand* behold the withering of thine own virtuous action. This is the *right* hand which must be restored to life : the left is the hand of vice ; let that perish and rot.

2. *And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.* Mark iii. 3.

That so the sight of his wretchedness might move his enemies to pity. *And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil by failing to do good?* To Christ then it is all one whether thou refuse to do good to one that needeth it when thou canst, or whether thou do him evil. Consider then the spirit in which thou performest the acts of charity which are asked of thee. Peradventure thou also art one that would run to lift a sheep out of a pit, that is to a task which sheweth prospect of advantage: yet when thou mightest help thy neighbour lethargy layeth hold on thee.

3. *He was grieved for the hardness of their hearts.* Mark iii. 5.

For that they would not own Him for Messias nor accept His teaching on the helping of a neighbour on the sabbath day. Ah, but how much darker is thy blindness, darkening thine eyes with the mists of passion! Grieve not thus the Lord's Christ. *And he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.* Hear the word of Christ bidding thee stretch forth thy hand to do thy duty. What profit is there in resolution or in vain longing if thou never go on unto action? *And they went forth, and . . . took counsel . . . how they might destroy him.* That which should have been for their benefit they abused to their own hurt. Such is the return thou makest unto God as often as thou abusest His benefits.

MONDAY

THE TWELVE APOSTLES ARE CHOSEN.

1. *And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray.* Luke vi. 12.

(1) While the Jews were considering how they might destroy Christ, He was seeking out, in His Apostles, the means of their salvation. Behold the difference between God's counsel and man's. (2) He withdraweth before their rage, so teaching us not to add fuel to such a flame. (3) He teacheth us the need of times for contemplation in the midst of active life, that the spirit may prepare itself for greater enterprise. (4) He teacheth likewise that if thou wouldest pray aright thou must withdraw thee from all clamour, that of the market-place without, and that of thy passions within.

2. *And continued all night in prayer to God.*
Luke vi. 12.

He prayeth all night before He chooseth His Apostles. So He instructeth thee that thou consult with God in such decisions as affect the salvation of souls, and that not lightly, but with prolonged deliberation. Human prudence sufficeth not for the things of God. [Often hast thou gone astray when thou hast taken no such counsel: but when thou hast done so, hast thou ever erred?]

3. *And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.* Luke vi. 13.

Thee also hath God called, by His own free grace, to the apostolical life. How great the dignity of such a call! How great thine own unworthiness! Presume not on the grace of thy vocation nor neglect to confirm it with good works. Judas was of the number of the Twelve; at that moment he was holier than thou: and yet he failed. It were wise to take heed of a fate which might befall thee also.

TUESDAY

CHRIST'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

1. *And when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them.* Matthew v. 1, 2.

Where the Master is set to teach, the disciples come to listen to His doctrine. God sitteth on His seat in thy heart to teach thee, and openeth His mouth by way of inspiration: if thou wouldest be a disciple come thou also, and when thou *hearest his voice*, *harden not thy heart*. Consider how lofty is the teaching thy great Master imparteth unto thee. Resolve thyself to be conformed thereto and not to the teaching of the world and the flesh. [He calleth them *blessed* whom the world and flesh call miserable. God is not deceived:] therefore the verdict of the world is false. Thou knowest this: and wilt thou still follow the principles of the world?

2. *Blessed are the poor in spirit.* Matthew v. 3.

They that for the love of God renounce all transitory things and uproot all covetousness from their hearts, that naked they may follow the naked Jesus. Ponder well whether indeed thou despisest earthly things: nay dost thou not hold them in esteem and cling closely to them? Thou mayest learn from Christ's example how thou shouldest resolve to dispose thyself to these. Now after what manner wilt thou follow Him? *For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* (1) Here is a proof of blessedness that none can gainsay. Who would deny blessedness to him that possesseth the kingdom of heaven. Yet these be the words of the Eternal Truth Himself: blessed then are the poor; not that they stand in full possession of the kingdom, but that they have a title thereunto. (2) Blessed are they likewise

with a blessedness of this life, inasmuch as there is nought that they desire. (3) They do possess that *Kingdom of God* of which Christ said *It is within you* (Luke xvii. 21) : for they possess their souls.

3. *Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.* Luke vi. 24.

He speaketh of them that have an immoderate affection for transitory things. As to the poor He promiseth the certainty of heaven, so against these He uttereth the thunder of eternal woe. For their hearts are bound with fetters so that they have no power to lift them constantly and wholly unto God. They *fall into temptation and a snare* (1 Timothy vi. 9). They *have received . . . consolation*, but it is *their own*, not God's; appearance, not reality. Thou art not numbered among these? Then happy art thou : give thanks to God, and take heed that more and more thou withdraw thy heart from transitory things, that He who is all may be thy only treasure.

WEDNESDAY

THE SECOND AND THIRD BEATITUDES.

1. *Blessed are the meek.* Matthew v. 5.

Not only they that restrain both stormy gusts and faintest breaths of wrath, but they also (as saith Clement of Alexandria) *that quell the strife of anger and desire and of their progeny within the soul*. Here lieth before thee, if thou wilt consider thy ways, a field that stretcheth as wide as the range of these appetites of anger and desire. How bearest thou thyself in dealing with sinners, in enduring injuries? Compare thyself with the example of Christ. Hear Him say to thee, *Learn of me; for I am meek* (Matthew xi. 29).

2. *For they shall inherit the earth.* Matthew v. 5.

What is this land they shall inherit? One day it shall be *the land* of the living; but even now the territory of their own hearts. The wrathful possess it not: the storm of anger driveth them from their domain. *He that regardeth reproof is prudent* (Proverbs xv. 5) even he that is not angered or disturbed thereby. *[As that is a miserable city (saith S. Chrysostom) which, though it be well fortified, yet harboureth traitors, so nothing is more blessed than deliverance from interior strife.]* Here is a blessedness which thou mayest bestow upon thyself: what hindereth thee?

3. *Blessed are they that mourn.* Matthew v. 4.

Of compunction they mourn their own, of pity others' sins; of devotion, the woes of this our exile; of desire, the deferring of the joys of everlasting life. What mournest thou? the losing of God or of thy fleshly comforts? the ills of the body, or of the soul? *For they shall be comforted.* By whom? *By the God of consolation.* Where? Not only in heaven, where *God shall wipe away all tears*, but also in this life, wherein the mourning of compunction and devotion is accompanied or else followed by consolation incomparable. But *woe unto you that laugh* with the world, and spend your days in prosperity, for in eternity *ye shall mourn and weep* (Luke vi. 25).

THURSDAY

THE FOURTH AND FIFTH BEATITUDES.

1. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst* with ardent longing *after righteousness.* Matthew v. 6.

This righteousness is the whole extent of serving and pleasing God. *[He looketh unto them that with*

ardent desire give themselves to virtuous deeds, and not to those only which bring honour, but likewise to such as seem low and mean, or arduous and difficult. How far art thou from ardour such as this! Thou thirstest, but it is after the *broken cisterns* of this world, *that can hold no water* of salvation. How soon dost thou weary of virtue when the taste thereof is bitter! Willest thou to serve and please God? Therein consisteth thine eternal salvation. Get thee then this thirst, without which virtue fainteth into listlessness.

2. *For they shall be filled.* Matthew v. 6.

One day, *when they awake up after God's likeness* (Psalm xvii. 16). But also in this life, since they desire nothing else. [For in the very desiring they have what they desire, inasmuch as the desire of serving and pleasing God is its own fulfilment.] The means of doing righteousness and serving God is ever to their hand, *whether they eat or drink or whatever they do*. Thus have they ever that whereby they may be filled. Doth not thy will seek to be thus satisfied? Or, at the least, dost thou not long that it should be so with thee? Ah that it had been so from the first moment of thy life! [*God . . . give us all an heart to serve him, and to do his will, with a good courage and a willing mind*](2 Maccabees i. 2, 3).

3. *Blessed are the merciful.* Matthew v. 7.

They that shew mercy, both corporal and spiritual, with pure intent, a virtuous motive, and wideness of heart such as will embrace foes as well as friends. *For they shall obtain mercy*: one day when He shall *crown thee with mercy* (Psalm ciii. 4), but also in this life through the remission of thy sins and abundance of gifts of grace. How if before the appointed hour thou hadst gone to eternal punishment and wert summoned thence into life, wert clothed with grace and led up to heaven? Wouldest thou not call that

mercy? [Such is the mercy which God hath shewn to thee as often as He hath remitted thy sins.] Behold the way then whereby thou mayest ensure thy finding of this mercy.

FRIDAY

THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH BEATITUDES.

1. *Blessed are the pure in heart.* Matthew v. 8.

He telleth of them that, though they have their imperfections, yet be far removed from grave sin, and therefore endued with grace; that have their affections purified, detached from the love of created things, and converted unto God; that avoid, so far as lieth in them, even the least imperfections, and with their whole heart strive to cleave unto God. Under this point look to the condition of thy soul: how far art thou detached from created things and united unto God? How carefully dost thou avoid imperfections?

2. *For they shall see God.* Matthew v. 8.

[One day face to face, but now through a glass darkly, seeing Him in His creatures.] They shall see Him by recollection of His presence which bringeth joy even in adversity: *When I am in heaviness I will think upon God* (Psalm lxxvii. 3). They shall see Him in the way of contemplation that giveth knowledge of sublime truth: seeing they will love; loving they will cleave to Him. Such indeed is the highest blessedness whereunto in this life thou mayest attain; yet, as nothing that is defiled may enter into the unveiled vision of God, so neither may the unclean soul attain unto the sight of Him on earth. To obtain the heavenly vision thou wouldest be found more pure than an angel in thy last agony. [So shouldest thou live day by day, and keep thyself pure: seeing that this day may be thy last.]

3. *Blessed are the peacemakers.* Matthew v. 9.

[They that have subjected the flesh unto the spirit, and the passions to the reason;] they that live in peace and charity with their neighbours; [they that make peace and reconciliation between men.] How standeth it with thee? If thou find thyself such, thank God: but if not, let thy care for these things be equal to thy desire to be a child of God. For it is they that *shall be called the children of God*, even of God who is pure spirit without flesh, pure reason without passion, the God of peace and not of dissension. The more thou canst believe that thou approachest to this likeness, the more certainly mayest thou account thyself the child of God.

SATURDAY

THE EIGHTH BEATITUDE.

1. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake.* Matthew v. 10.

Not for their own faults. It is certain that *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution* (2 Timothy iii. 12). Therefore if thou wilt not go back from righteousness thou must be *ready to die rather than to transgress the laws of God* (2 Maccabees vii. 2). But how art thou minded when there cometh a choice between either enduring somewhat or else transgressing against some virtue or command of God? Thou professest to follow Jesus and Him crucified, but thou wilt not endure the nails: to avoid suffering thou art ready to forsake both virtue and thy rule. [Either thou must confess that thou art no follower of Jesus, or thou must learn to suffer.]

2. *For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Matthew v. 10.

Yea, both that kingdom which is complete in heaven and that which beginneth while we are in the way. For the kingdom is *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost* (Romans xiv. 17). He cannot be deprived of righteousness who would rather suffer anything than break one rule. Lay up for thyself this kingdom wherein is contained a future happiness which cannot be shaken. *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer* (Revelation ii. 10) whether from the world which speaketh against thee, from the devil that afflicteth thee, or from the flesh that lusteth against the spirit.

3. *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you . . . and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.* Matthew v. 11.

Who shall deny the blessedness of him whom God hath blessed? *For the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it* (Proverbs x. 22). But God blesseth them that the world revileth for their justice. *Blessings are upon the head of the just* (Proverbs x. 6). *I will curse your blessings* (Malachi ii. 2). Yet lovest thou the praises and blessings of men? Dost thou then choose to be cursed of God? Knowest thou not that He said, *Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you* (Luke vi. 26).

THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

OF THE THREE QUALITIES OF APOSTOLIC MEN.

1. *Ye are the salt of the earth.* Matthew v. 13.

The properties of salt, saith Pliny, are biting, freezing, cleansing, alleviating, drying. So then the

apostolic man should in himself be perfected in the purgative way, which is the way of penitence, and must lead others by the same path, before he introduce them to the ways of illumination or of union. What sayest thou of thyself? What progress hast thou made along this way? Hast thou completed the half?

2. *Ye are the light of the world.* Matthew v. 14.

He describeth the second stage of the way of apostleship as *light*. By this understand the illuminative way, or the earnest desire of perfection. Herein also should the apostolic man be perfected in himself by the practice of those virtues which he learneth from the study of the life and teaching of Christ. Purgation sufficeth not. He must in himself be filled and adorned with virtues that he may be able to communicate them to others also, enlightening their minds, dissipating error, moving their hearts. Hast thou even one virtue perfected? How many thou lackest altogether? Hast even the earnest desire for them? In what ways seekest thou to make increase of thy talents, that thou mayest be serviceable? or dost thou put thy candle under a bushel?

3. *A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.* Matthew v. 14.

Thus He describeth the way of union or of contemplation. As *a city is a multitude of citizens self-sufficing for the purposes of life* (as saith Aristotle) so they that are perfect, cleaving to God alone, have abundant sufficiency for perfection of life, both for themselves and for others. See then if thy sufficiency is in God alone. Cleavest thou only unto Him and not to creatures? Referrest thou all things unto Him? Seekest thou for nought apart from Him?

MONDAY

OF SETTING A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

1. *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works.* Matthew v. 16.

Not every act can be secret, nor should be public : but let thy public actions be done well, in truth and not in appearance only, *that every one . . . may please his neighbour for his good to edification* (Romans xv. 2). Examine then thy words in common conversation ; especially before the younger who are ever ready to learn from the elder ; are they idle or boastful ? Examine thy demeanour : is it restrained ? Examine thine actions : are they in harmony with right ?

2. *And glorify your Father which is in heaven.* Matthew v. 16.

Here is prescribed the right intention for all good works wrought publicly : first that thou thyself mayest please God, and in the second place that He may receive glory from others as the Source of that which is good. So without uttering one word thou mayest promote God's glory. But thou detractest from His glory if for human respect thou refrain from the open performing of a good deed that seemliness may allow or duty demand. Examine thine intentions whether they be thus directed : make this thy resolve : *Therefore I will look unto the Lord* (Micah vii. 7).

3. *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them.* Matthew vi. 1.

He forbiddeth vainglory. He that doeth righteousness to be seen doeth grievous unrighteousness : for he taketh that which is God's to his own use, against His will and in disobedience to His command. For God alone is King and Lord of glory. *Unto . . . the*

only wise God be honour and glory (1 Timothy i. 17). Without His grace thou canst do nothing. That is it which *worketh . . . both to will and to do* (Philippians ii. 13). Glory is that which springeth out of the good work. Wilt thou who hast done nothing cozen God who hath done all, and take the glory to thyself?

TUESDAY

OF THE EXACT OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW.

1. *I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil.*
Matthew v. 17.

(1) Before Christ the law had not been given in its fullness or perfection: He came to fulfil and make it perfect. He commanded that the outward act should be animated by the affection of the heart: He gave us counsels of perfection, and the like. We for our part are enriched by Him with His own merits, whereby we may the more easily observe the law. Consider the debt thou owest to this Lawgiver. (2) Take notice that it is not enough *not to destroy* the law: thou must also *fulfil* it; that is to say that thou must reach perfection in performing what thy rule demands.

2. *Verily I say unto you . . . One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*
Matthew v. 18.

He pointeth to His own example. He willed to observe exactly the whole law and all that was written of Him in the Prophets, so that heaven and earth should pass away rather than He should fail to fulfil the least commandment. Is such thy mind towards the Law of God and the rules of thy profession of religion? Use all endeavour that thou neglect not one tittle. He that careth for small things acquireth great things.

3. *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments . . . he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.* Matthew v. 19.

First He pointeth to His own example : then He leadeth thee to see how it demandeth that thou keep even the least commandments and precepts of thy rule. There is no evil so small that it slopeth not to worse. Mark that the Greek and Latin tongues have Loose for Break : which teacheth us that all the commandments are fastened in one bundle ; if thou loose one, thou wilt soon undo them all. He calleth them *least*, to shew us how easy they be to observe. Let these considerations move thee to give care to these least things : if thou takest no heed of the gentle slope, thou must fear that ruin that cometh by little and little.

WEDNESDAY

OF LOVING CARE IN THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW.

1. *Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Matthew v. 20.

God demandeth from Christians more things and higher than from the Jews. They were not required to go beyond the husk of the law : to do what was commanded, to abstain from what was forbidden. But inasmuch as He bestoweth on us a fuller supply of grace, He expecteth from us living works, such as be animated by the affection of the heart. For a like reason thou mayest conclude that more is expected of one in the clerical or religious state than of the layfolk. Shame on thee that thou art surpassed in virtue by so many of secular estate. Thou must needs fear that God may withdraw His graces from one that maketh no use of them. Covet earnestly the best gifts.

2. *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you.* Matthew v. 21, 22.

Ponder the superior excellencies of the law of grace. (1) The old law, given to a ruder race, forbade none but the coarser sins: the law of grace condemneth all. (2) The one was concerned with exterior things only: the other pierceth to the marrow. (3) The promises of the one were temporal; of the other eternal. Give thanks then that God hath kept thee for the later law; stay not thou at the husk; seek the substance and the fruit.

3. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.* Matthew v. 48.

His perfection is such that in Him is all perfection and no imperfection, no, not the least. Now if thou take care that there be no imperfection in thee, thou securest the supreme perfection. For so thou securest that thou thyself love God supremely, which is the height of perfection; and likewise that thou be loved of Him, which is the height of blessedness. The less of thine own, that is of imperfection, thou minglest with thy work, the purer is the charity wherewith it is endowed. Thus thou hast in thine own hands both perfection and blessedness. But how many an imperfection needeth to be cast out!

THURSDAY

OF THE CASTING OUT OF SCANDAL.

1. *If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee.* Matthew v. 29.

By the eye S. Chrysostom understandeth all superiors that be in authority. They may cause thee to offend if thou suffer them to lead thee by

mere respect of their persons, if thou make their breaches of rule into an example for thyself, or if thou transgress the rule from affectionate regard to them. Ponder thine own habits in respect of this. *Pluck out* such an eye as this; mortify such an affection. Have more regard unto the Rule which cometh from God, than unto example which is of man. If thou mayest not rid thyself of such scandal, lay the matter before him to whom it appertaineth and he will give thee aid.

2. *If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee.* Matthew v. 30.

By the hand understand thine associates and equals. Such are most often held in affectionate regard; and they may cause thee to offend by excessive or particular familiarity, by frequent visiting, by conversation, by fondness, by all which means thy heart is gradually made soft, and groweth lukewarm in the love of God. *Cut off* such intimacies and conversation and the like, and turn thee more often to colloquy with God.

3. *If thy foot offend thee, cut it off.* Mark ix. 45.

By the foot understand thy spiritual children, thy pupils, thy subjects. They may cause thee to offend if through excess of affection thou indulge them more than is meet, heed not their faults, make favourites of them and so give offence to others, engage thyself in unprofitable conversation, and the like. Acknowledge the danger of such affections, concealed for the most part by a cloke of piety, so that thou art destroyed almost before thou markest the danger. Consider also that thus thou mayest be the cause of ruin to another, and his soul may be required at thy hands.

FRIDAY

OF LOVING OUR ENEMIES.

1. *But I say unto you, Love your enemies.*
Matthew v. 44.

Who saith it? Even He that *first loved us* (1 John iv. 19), and *when we were enemies* reconciled us to God by His death (Romans v. 10). Consider that thine enemy is God's creature as thou art: that if thou hast God to thy Father, this one is thy brother; that He is marked out for the same final end as thine own, and redeemed by the same Blood. Love him for thine own sake, inasmuch as he doeth thee service and maketh thee to strive in the contest for glory: inasmuch also as God will forgive thee if thou forgivest him. If thou hatest him, what dost thou injure save thine own soul? Hatred itself is a greater evil than any that he may have done to thee. Love him, and thou shalt be loved of God.

2. *Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.*
Matthew v. 44.

To love of the heart thou must add love in word and deed. Yea, it sufficeth not to bear no hatred, for He biddeth thee to *love*. And love is no idle affection: it must be proved by action. Now what doest thou to him that hateth thee and useth thee despitefully? Dost thou not render evil for evil? How speakest thou of him? Dost thou follow Paul, who said *Being reviled, we bless?* or Christ, who prayed for them that crucified Him?

3. *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.* Matthew v. 45.

Behold the profit that cometh of loving thine enemies. Wilt thou be a child of God? Here thou hast a swift path thereto. Love thine enemy. How

shalt thou know that thou art a child of God, save by being like unto God? *Maketh he not*, saith S. Chrysostom, *his sun to rise upon the just and upon the unjust?* Doth He not sustain thee, even while thou art offending Him? Doth He not forgive thy sins these many times?

SATURDAY

THE DISPOSITION FOR PRAYER, AND THE FIRST PETITION.

1. *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father.* Matthew vi. 6.

If thou wouldest pray aright thou must withdraw thyself from all tumult, both in body and in soul. Thy senses are stirred by that which is presented to them, and they be the windows of the soul. If they be open, every breath of air will blow in. But in silence God speaketh to the heart. Even so when Christ would pray, He went aside among the hills. But far more needful is it that thou withdraw thyself from disturbance of the soul. The stirring of one single passion shutteth out all thoughts of God. The poorness of the harvest thou reapest from thy times of prayer cometh from this, that thou controlllest not thy senses nor the movements of thy soul. If thou wouldest be thus composed in prayer thou must accustom thyself outside thy prayer-time to composure.

2. *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven.* Matthew vi. 9.

Thus must thou begin every prayer by thinking to whom thou addressest thyself. *Father.* Learn from this word how reverence, confidence and love must accompany thy prayer. Deservest thou not this

reproach from God : *If then I be a father, where is mine honour?* (Malachi i. 6). Consider next how unworthy thou art to be a son of thy great Father. Let this move thee to abject humility. *Our.* Therefore all we are His sons. All then are brethren : all must be loved of thee : therefore if thou have not charity thy gift will not be accepted. *Who art :* who alone art. Imbue thyself with the sense of the greatness of God. *In heaven.* Thou must have fervour, since thy prayer must pierce the heavens. So also let thy petitions seek for the things of heaven, not those of earth. On all these points examine thyself, and so resolve.

3. *Hallowed be thy name.* Matthew vi. 9.

This is the first of all that thou shouldest long for : that God may be known of all, and worshipped, and that service may be done to none other ; that His holiness be owned, His goodness loved, His justice feared, and that every creature should be subject to His power. Such is our true end, to which we must direct our every effort. Now is it not in word alone that thou makest this petition, while in act thy pride destroyeth it? What is indeed the object of thy quest while thou so esteemest thyself and seekest for esteem? *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give the praise* (Psalm cxv. 1).

THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE SECOND AND THIRD PETITIONS.

1. *Thy kingdom come.* Matthew vi. 10.

Thou prayest that God may reign within thy heart : *The kingdom of God is within you* (Luke xvii. 21) or that He may reign throughout the world : *The kingdom is the Lord's : and he is the Governour among the people* (Psalm xxii. 28) ; or else thou

prayest for thyself that by a happy death thou mayest attain unto the kingdom of the blessed; whereby thou dost profess that thou art all prepared and that nothing holdeth thee back. But is this indeed the true thought of thy heart? or dost thou mock thyself and God? Is there no love of life detaining thee? no affection for the things of earth? Put thyself to the test: this very moment thou must die—what sayest thou? This moment thou must renounce all things—how art thou minded?

2. *Thy will be done.* Matthew vi. 10.

What could be more just than this? His will is the rule for ours: ours is abused if it march not with His. He is our Lord and our Father: *Thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint* (2 Samuel xv. 15). *Father, I will do all things which thou hast commanded me* (Tobit v. 1). But dost thou practice that thou dost profess? dost thou that will of God made plain by His commandments? Dost thou fulfil that will of His good pleasure in those things which thou knowest to be pleasing unto Him? Or livest thou not rather by thine own will and pleasure and as thy passions move thee?

3. *In earth, as it is in heaven.* Matthew vi. 10.

Here thou askest that God's will be done as the Blessed do it. Wherefore should our obedience be less than theirs? Because we have freedom? shall we then use *our liberty for a cloke of maliciousness*? Now after what manner is God's will done in heaven? For the pure love of Him; without delay; in all things; without gainsaying. In thine own soul findest thou obedience such as this? What if the commands of God be arduous and repugnant to thy senses. Wretch that thou art, how little then dost thou regard His will!

MONDAY

THE FOURTH AND FIFTH PETITIONS.

1. *Give us this day our daily bread.* Matthew vi. 11.

As a beggar at the doors of Divine grace thou askest food for body and soul. For the body, *bread*, not luxury or dainties; so that *having* bodily nourishment we may *be therewith content*. If such is thy request thou wilt be content with the common meal, ay, and that frugal. If thy share should be inferior, thou wilt bethink thee that as a beggar thou receivest it from the hand of God. For the soul thou askest either that word whereby man liveth, or the most Holy Eucharist, which albeit thou receivest not this day yet mayest thou ask to have it through spiritual communion. So live then that thou mayest be worthy to receive the same each day.

2. *And forgive us our debts.* Matthew vi. 12.

What vast debts thou hast contracted! (1) *All that thou art thou owest unto him from whom thou hast it all*, saith S. Bernard. (2) So likewise all talents of nature and of grace thou owest unto God. How deep is thine ingratitude if thou usest the instruments of love as weapons of offence. (3) Then there is that huge debt of sin which can never be redeemed but by the merits of Christ. For thy humiliation acknowledge thy sin; but own God's mercy for the restoring of thy confidence. But do not thou who *this day* beggest release, *this day* contract new debts.

3. *As we forgive our debtors.* Matthew vi. 12.

There standeth a condition. If thou forgivest not others thou prayest that thou be not forgiven. *For if ye forgive men your heavenly Father will also forgive you*. Behold the goodness of God! *He hath put thy future judgment in thine own hands*, saith

S. Chrysostom. Now God forgiveth as soon as a man asketh forgiveness ; nay, He preventeth the petition by the incitation of grace : and He forgiveth completely and as often as He is besought. Is thy forgiveness like to His? Forgivest thou immediately? or doth the sun go down upon thy wrath? Dost thou prevent thine enemy by being first to speak? or sayest thou, There is no obligation? Dost thou forgive as often as he asketh thee? or dost thou complain that injury hath been done thee not once but countless times? Is thy forgiveness complete? or dost thou say, I hate him not, but I cannot be his friend?

TUESDAY

THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH PETITIONS.

1. *And lead us not into temptation.* Matthew vi. 13.

Thou hast implored the remission of thy past debts : now thou dost beg that thou incur no more. Frail man, thou hast thy being in the midst of mighty foes, and art never free from the assaults of earthly desires. By thyself thou art powerless : thou askest help to resist thine enemies. Mark well thine especial temptations and the danger of them ; consider how thou mayest best resist their onslaught. Doubt not that God will grant His grace : *never doth he deny it to one that doeth what lieth in him.* But mark those words : *what lieth in him.*

2. *And lead us not.* Matthew vi. 13.

Thou askest not immunity from temptation, but from defeat. Often temptation profiteth, for the very experience thereof, for humility, for trust in God. God giveth thee freedom to conquer or be conquered. But thou dost only mock Him, if thou askest to be delivered and ledest thyself into tempta-

tion: as though a man should cast himself into a river and pray that he should not be made wet. Therefore if thou avoid not those occasions that lead thee to consent to sin, thou art not serious in this thy prayer.

3. *But deliver us from evil.* Matthew vi. 13.

He nameth no particular, and therefore meaneth every sort of evil, of body, or of soul, in so far as it is repugnant to salvation. Yet bodily ills be not so repugnant save through thine own weakness. See that thy actions be not opposed to thy petition, from sluggishness or lukewarmness. Perchance in thy slothfulness thou desirest, and hast nothing; thou puttest off the time; thou feignest lack of power; thou sayest *There is a lion without* (Proverbs xxii. 13); thus thou wilt not set thine hand to work.

WEDNESDAY

THAT WE MUST LAY UP TREASURES IN HEAVEN AND NOT
UPON EARTH.

1. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.* Matthew vi. 19.

That is to say: *Love not the world* (1 John ii. 15). Understand this word therefore as concerning the lust of the flesh and of the eyes and of worldly honour. And wherefore saith He so? Because death as a *moth doth corrupt*, and as a *thief break through*. If thou wouldest transfer thine affection to the next world, remember that thou must depart from this. 'Tis thine affection for this present world that hindereth thy love for that. But if *this night thy soul should be required of thee, whose shall those things be* wherein thou didst find content? (Luke xii. 20). How shall they profit thee? Nay, how shall they do thee harm!

2. *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.* Matthew vi. 20.

There is thy native land : thither thou must wend thy way. If thou sendest no treasure before thee, thou shalt find thyself eternally an exile. There thou mayest not acquire it : thou must amass it here, and send it on before to await thee and to be enjoyed. A niggard store will not suffice : thy *treasure* is demanded, a great abundance and costly. Be these then thy conclusions : (1) To let no time or opportunity of well-doing pass thee by. (2) To press on to good deeds, great and outstanding.

3. *Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* Matthew vi. 21.

What thou dost highly value, that thou lovest, on that thou settest thine heart. Love followeth on estimation. And the lover ever becometh like that he loveth—earthly or heavenly or divine inasmuch as he loveth earth or heaven or God. Unhappy man, if thou turn *thine eyes down to the ground!* Mad man, if thou dost lavish thy love to purchase earthly mire, when this is the one possession thou canst barter for thy God ! All this thou knowest well : yet still thou givest thy heart to created things.

THURSDAY

THE SINGLE AND THE EVIL EYE.

1. *The light of the body is the eye.* Matthew vi. 22.

By the eye thou mayest understand the conscience. As the eye directeth the footsteps and all the actions of the body, so doth the conscience man's whole life. The members follow the guidance of the eye : so

doth a good man the monitions of his conscience. This inner eye is the means whereby God enlighteneth us to behold things indiscernible to sense, to see the world in its true colours, to keep the true path amid the darkness and confusion of this life. Attend thereto *as unto a light that shineth in a dark place*. Make this eye clean and pure. Beware of blindness and of ignorance.

2. *If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.* Matthew vi. 22.

By the eye S. Chrysostom understandeth the intellect. This must be *single*, not darkened and imbued by the false principles of the world and the flesh: then thy whole course of action shall be full of light and pleasing unto God. For the intellect is the master of the will. Examine then thy principles: be they single and referred to none but God? or face they two ways, to God, but also to thine own convenience? Strive to imbue thine intellect with principles that be pure and true and single and after God's heart, and to make no peace with the world and the flesh.

3. *If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.* Matthew vi. 23.

By the eye S. Austin understandeth the intention. As often as the intention is directed otherwise than towards God it is evil: just as a servant is evil if he transferreth his duty from his master to another; and much more if to an enemy. But this is what thou doest when thou lookest unto vanity and thine own convenience rather than to the glory of God. Ponder then both the need and the benefit of a pure intention. See that this thine eye be single, and directed unto God alone for His own sake.

FRIDAY

THAT A MAN CANNOT SERVE TWO MASTERS.

1. *No man can serve two masters.* Matthew vi. 24.

Not if their commands be diverse or contrary. Two masters claim thee, the one by right, the other by usurpation—God, and the bodily senses that rebel against Him. Unhappy man, enduring not servitude so much as ever-present tyranny! but unhappier that thou wilt to endure it! Choose now whom thou wilt serve. Why strivest thou to serve both, which *no man can do*? Say then to God, *I am thy servant* (Psalm cxix. 125).

2. *He will hate the one, and love the other.* Matthew vi. 24.

One cause why thou canst not serve these two is that their commands be contrary; if thou love these, thou must hate those. Who could at one and the same time obey contrary commands? What be the commands of God? To keep down the bodily senses; to crush thine appetite. And what the commands of the senses? To indulge thyself; to enjoy the creatures. So then thou canst not serve them both. Adore thy rightful Lord: devote thyself to Him; then *unto thee shall be thy desire, and thou shalt rule over it* (Genesis iv. 7).

3. *He will hold to the one, and despise the other.* Matthew vi. 24.

The other cause is in thyself: thou canst not at the same time will somewhat and will it not, as thou must needs do if thou wouldest serve them both. Then thou must needs will not to serve thy lusts, as the one commandeth thee, and will to serve them as the other biddeth. One or the other thou must renounce. Choose then: whether of the twain wilt thou have? Truly the very name of each sufficeth for thy choice.

SATURDAY

THAT WE MUST LAY ASIDE CARE FOR TEMPORAL THINGS
AND SEEK THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

1. *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.* Matthew vi. 25.

He forbiddeth excessive care for the body and its necessities: (1) Because it is as useless as if one should wish to *add one cubit unto his stature*. (2) Because this excessive care detracteth from care for the soul which should take the chief place: *Is not the life more than meat?* Why then takest thou so much thought for thy place, thy duties, thy convenience? The more thine anxiety for these, the less provision for thy soul. How little thou carest for thy soul! Ponder then the greater worth thereof.

2. *For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.* Matthew vi. 32.

He teacheth us to cast the care of these things upon God who feedeth the birds and clotheth the lilies. For He knoweth with the knowledge that belongeth to a Father's providence. Thy care to live here or there at greater ease, to refuse this duty or that because it is difficult, proveth thee distrustful. Do not *the Gentiles* who have not faith *seek after all these things?* Cast thyself therefore into the bosom of the providence of God, for *He careth* for thee.

3. *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.* Matthew vi. 33.

The kingdom of God is His glory and our felicity. By *righteousness* understand the means thereto which we must use. Hither must thy thought be first directed: or else thou makest this care give way to other cares. If so, be sure thou shalt not find the

kingdom. Thou canst not please God if thou put second what He biddeth thee put first. Thus cometh it to pass that He withdraweth His graces from thee. Moreover, thou thyself expendest thy chief labour on what thou most esteemest. So then if that be other than the kingdom of heaven thy toil will be devoted thereunto. But is it not foolishness to make anything of more account than the glory and kingdom of God? Let thy chief care then be that which Jesus commendeth unto thee. Look to the end for which thou wast created: spend thyself on the means thereto and be not weary.

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

RASH JUDGMENT MUST BE AVOIDED.

1. *Judge not, that ye be not judged.* Matthew vii. 1.

God created thee not to be thy neighbour's judge, but his comrade. *The Father . . . hath committed all judgment unto the Son* (John v. 22). He therefore that judgeth usurpeth Christ's prerogative. Justice requireth that a man be presumed innocent until he be found guilty. Charity demandeth that thou give to all acts the most favourable interpretation. See how much sin underlieth one rash judgment. Examine thyself whether thou also dost usurp the Divine prerogative. Thou wouldest do better to judge thyself so that thou be not judged.

2. *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.* Matthew vii. 2.

This is the penalty of them that rashly judge. The just judgment of God permitteth them to suffer the like. Likewise it permitteth that they themselves fall into the very faults with which they charge their

neighbours. *Why dost thou judge thy brother? . . . we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ* (Romans xiv. 10). The more severely each hath judged his neighbour the more severe shall be the judgment on himself. *Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest* (Romans ii. 1). Could there be sterner words? Fear thou also then the judgment of God: and forasmuch as *every one of us shall give an account of himself to God* (Romans xiv. 12) do thou the rather look to the ordering of thine own cause.

3. *Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye* (Matthew vii. 5).

Behold the remedy for passing judgment: consider thine own shortcomings; if thou ponder them well thou shalt find them greater than thy neighbour's. *When thou art conscious of thine own sins, how canst judge of another's?* (S. Ambrose). If that thou judgest to be evil be in truth good, acknowledge the malice of a judgment such as this: if it be doubtful, wherefore dost thou place on it the worse interpretation? If it be clearly evil, then, saith S. Bernard, *excuse the intention if thou canst not excuse the deed: impute it to ignorance, to deception, to accident.*

MONDAY

THE COMMENDATION OF PRAYER.

1. *Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* Matthew vii. 7.

Here is shewn the way to grace and to glory. Standest thou in need of grace? Ask it by humble

prayer; seek it by those means which must be joined to prayer; knock with patience. In this light consider the quality of thy prayer. Is it humble as it ought to be? Is it rooted in the acknowledgment of thine own wretchedness? Dost thou seek in this wise? Peradventure thou askest humility but wilt not humiliation: or poverty but wilt not defect of anything; or patience, but wilt not to suffer pain. But this is to will and not will the same thing, to ask it and refuse it. Acknowledge thy foolishness: pray to be rid of it; resolve to live by the prophet's rule. *If ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come* (Isaiah xxi. 12).

2. *For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.* Matthew vii. 8.

Here thou seest the effect of prayer, certain and infallible, for God hath promised it. Believe and trust. Only thy will must be so ordered as to will the will of God: for if thou wilt aught else, thou wilt what would harm thee, as a sick man might do. *If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us* (1 John v. 14). So shalt thou always obtain thy petition, whether God grant or deny thy request: if He deny He giveth somewhat of equal value and more profitable to thyself. Peradventure thou hast not prayed thus, but hast willed to bend God's will to thine, not to subdue thine own to His. This is not to trust but to presume, and by this path a man goeth far astray.

3. *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father . . . give good things to them that ask him?* Matthew vii. 11.

In this saying He useth the goodness of God and the Father's heart which yearneth after us as an

argument to strengthen our confidence. By adoption hath He made Himself our Father, and us His sons. Being both God and Father He possesseth the knowledge and the power and the will to do us good. Nay He cannot will otherwise unless we compel Him. Hath He not proved the same a thousand times towards thee? How great thy debt to this good God! What manner of confidence shall thy heart henceforth feel in Him?

TUESDAY

THE STRAIT AND THE NARROW WAY.

1. *Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction.* Matthew vii. 13.

While he liveth, man is in the way, not at the goal. But in this way how many there be that go astray! Wretched are they for all eternity. *There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs xiv. 12). The broad way is that which is not hedged in by God's law and by reason, and that loseth itself in sensual excess. Ah! how *many there be that walk therein!* O my soul, how long hast walked in this way! Retrace at last thy wandering footsteps; restrict thy desires within the bounds of law and reason. Look forward, for the way of thy lusts wherein thou walkest *leadeth to destruction.*

2. *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few . . . find it.* Matthew vii. 14.

The way to heaven is straight, for it admitteth not thy wishes, but thy duties only. Thou canst not pass along it with the beasts of passion and their burden of earthly desires: thou must walk alone with God. It admitteth not thy far flung train of pride, nor thy

retinue of worldly honour. To enter on this path is to renounce all. O wretched man, behold at last how far thou hast wandered! *Few . . . find it*, and thou hast not been of the number. The empty splendour of the world hath bound the eyes of thy mind, thy passions have made thee blind.

3. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate.* Luke xiii. 24.

It needeth no striving to go through the broad gate: thou rushest through by natural impulse. Miserable is thy condition if thou strivest not against thine impulses. To pass through that strait gate thou must needs spend thyself; thou must do thyself violence to will and labour truly; thou must lop off thy lusts and thine earthly affection for created things; thou must cast away the load of worldly honour, self-love, and such like things. Art thou willing for this? If thou wouldest be so, look to the end: for this way *leadeth unto life*.

WEDNESDAY

THAT WE MUST BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS.

1. *Beware of false prophets.* Matthew vii. 15.

Which be they? Within are lusts, evil affections, love of self and of the creatures. How false are their doctrines! Teach they not that it is good to be highly esteemed and evil to be despised: that it is right to seek consolation in earthly things, and wrong to neglect them? Without are ill-affected friends, whose examples thou followest as though they were very torches of truth. From them thou learnest to withstand conscience, to neglect small things, to indulge thyself. Are not these the teachers whose principles thou hast followed, and to thy great loss? Wilt thou follow them still?

2. *Which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.* Matthew vii. 15.

Evil never cometh open-faced, but putteth on a cloke of goodness. How easily it playeth a trick upon us, unless we have kept the intellect pure and clear, in harmony with faith and with the principles of the virtues; unless the heart be stoutly guarded against the words and examples of the careless! Wretched man, hast thou not found them wolves which seemed to be sheep? Now let thy losses teach thee wisdom. For the future care not what blandishments they display, but ask what they be in themselves, whither they would lead thee, and what followeth in their train.

3. *Ye shall know them by their fruits.* Matthew vii. 16.

Even as thou knowest one tree from another. Ponder awhile the fruits of thy love of self and of the creatures: are they not what God abhorreth? or the fruits of familiar friendship with the careless; do they not nourish a worm within thy conscience? Knowest thou the truth of this, yet amendest not thy ways? Fear lest thou be hewn down. *For every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

THURSDAY

OF DOING THE WILL OF GOD.

1. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father.* Matthew vii. 21.

(1) He reproveth them that though they perform certain works of devotion which in themselves be good, yet leave undone the works of obligation. (2) He reproveth all much speaking and little doing: all

high knowledge of God that leadeth to little performance. Art thou not of those whom He reproveth? Thou knowest and sayest much concerning God and the life of holiness : what dost thou work? When thou art in straits thou criest, Lord, Lord : but how much doest thou for thyself?

2. *He that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* Matthew vii. 21.

The infallible saying is gone forth. Thou shalt enter no other way than by doing the will of God. But what is that will? He maketh it known by them that be set over thee. *He that heareth you heareth me* (Luke x. 16). Likewise it is shewn forth in the Scriptures, which be not devised by men but by God. *If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law . . . the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful . . . because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the Lord thy God* (Deuteronomy xxviii. 58, 59, 62). See then whether thy doings conform to the will of God. How art thou disposed towards the commands of those set over thee? and how towards the commandments of God?

3. *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and . . . cast out devils? . . .* Matthew vii. 22.

Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. To teach, to absolve, to make a stir among the people, all these are graces without merit. If these be all thou hast to bring to God, then shalt thou hear those words, *I never knew you*. So then God demandeth of thee what is in some wise thine own, co-operation, diligence. How empty are thy hands till now ! Is it thus that thou wilt appear before God? Do what thou canst to increase thy store. For though thou hast *done* all thou canst, yet shalt thou be an *unprofitable servant*. Nevertheless God will not ask of thee more than thou canst give.

FRIDAY

A LEPER IS CLEANSED.

1. *Behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* Matthew viii. 2.

He confesseth Him Lord: he believeth Him almighty: he owneth the like perfection in His will as in His power. He saith not, Make me clean, but submitteth his desire of healing to the will of Christ. Are thine own dealings with thy God thus ordered? When thou askest, dost thou ask in faith? Believest thou that He is Lord indeed, and hath power to grant thy request or deny it of His own good pleasure? Dost thou submit thyself and thy requests to His disposal with perfect resignation? This thou must do; or else thou askest what He willeth not.

2. *Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean.* Matthew viii. 3.

Jesus: how kind, how swift! Would that, when He toucheth me in the Holy Eucharist, He might say to me, *I will; be thou clean* of the leprosy that afflicteth thy soul. He sheweth how will and power alike are ready to grant thy requests. Therefore in aught that concerneth thy salvation say not *It is through the Lord that I fell away* (Ecclesiasticus xv. 11). Say not, I would; but God giveth not the grace. He giveth it not? Because He cannot? that thou canst not believe. Because He will not? That is false. He will not indeed by way of miracle: but do thou thy share and He surely will. That is the condition for having thy request. But therein lieth thine infirmity.

3. *And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man.* Matthew viii. 3, 4.

The precept to tell no man, saith S. Ambrose, is to teach us not to spread abroad our acts of kindness. So saith S. Chrysostom, Teaching us how alien to Him was any breath of vainglory or boasting and display. Learn thou thy lesson: seek not to entice the empty breezes of flattery; preach not thyself but Jesus, the only origin of all in thee that meriteth any praise.

SATURDAY

A CENTURION'S SERVANT IS HEALED.

1. *There came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home, sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. Matthew viii. 5, 6.*

The master praying for his man shameth them that have more care for a dog than for a servant. Such conduct thou condemnest: yet there is equal shame in caring more for the body than the soul. Lieth not thy soul sick of the palsy? Thou knowest what to do, yet thy palsied will can make no motion of generosity. By this defect account for thy slow progress: nor canst thou hope for more, if thou amend it not.

2. *Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. Matthew viii. 7.*

Jesus, how kind, how swift! Thou seest mine infirmity. Say then even to me, *I will come and heal him.* Let me likewise learn to fly at once to my neighbour's side in every sickness or necessity. *The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof.* Mark his humility. Think lowly of thyself, and thou shalt find it easy to be despised. No man is dismayed to receive from others such judgment and such speech as he useth of himself in all sincerity. What sayest thou

when Jesus cometh under thy soul's roof? But how long abideth that humility which thou then dost feel? How shameful is thine inconstancy in a resolve so oft renewed.

3. *Jesus . . . marvelled, and said to them that followed . . . I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.* Matthew viii. 10.

He marvelleth at a Gentile's faith, and preferreth it above that of the Jews, enlightened though they were by the knowledge of God. He goeth on to say that many from among the nations shall come from the East and from the West into the kingdom of God, and the children of the kingdom shall be cast out. Now bethink thee how many there be of those whom thou despisest who surpass thyself in virtuous life. Thou art deceived by self-love and self-esteem. Take heed lest thou, destined in thy Baptism to be a child of the kingdom, fall from thine estate and another take thy place. *Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.* See what confidence and humility can do for thee with God.

THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

A WIDOW'S SON IS RAISED.

1. *When he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.* Luke vii. 12.

Death cometh without warning to this only son in the flower and hope of youth. Who shall have confidence in life? Let the young often ponder this thought. They be more that die in youth than in old age, too often unprepared, deceived by the joyous expectation of continuing life. What if this present

hour were set for thy departure? Do now what thou wouldest then do if thou knewest that this were so. It was of purpose and not by chance that Jesus came that way. How good He is! How often hath He in like manner crossed thy path! They met at *the gate of the city*, where of old judgment was set. Death is the gate of eternity. There shalt thou be judged. Jesus, be there to help.

2. *The Lord . . . had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.* Luke vii. 13.

O my soul, it is the property of thy God to have compassion. On that truth fix thy hopes: in that seek thy consolation. *Weep not.* Thy tears for somewhat lost betoken love for it when it was thine. Why settest thou thy love on that which perisheth? One day thou shalt lament that thou hast loved it. Love that which is eternal, which thou canst never lose, unless of set purpose thou castest it away.

3. *And he came and touched the bier: . . . And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.* Luke vii. 14.

Even so, if thy soul be dead through sin, God worketh in thy case. He *cometh* by prevenient grace. How couldest thou ever rise in thine own strength? He *toucheth* thee, by fear or hope. By many an inspiration He crieth in thine ears, *Arise*. Lo, thine arising is the work of God. Take note now of thine own part. (1) *They that bare him stood still.* Thine untamed passions were bearing thee along. Now they must stand still, and be restrained. (2) *He that was dead sat up.* Thou must arouse thyself and think upon eternity. (3) *And began to speak with Christ,* and give Him thanks and praise.

MONDAY

JOHN BAPTIST SENDETH UNTO CHRIST.

1. *John . . . sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* Matthew xi. 2, 3.

(1) Whence sendeth he? From prison. Even in peril of his life he ceaseth not to exercise his trust. Yet what vexation is there so light that it draweth not thy thoughts from God? (2) He, who had pointed unto Christ, enquireth not for his own sake, but his disciples', to give them occasion of joining themselves unto Him. See his zeal for souls, and mastery of the art of winning them. (3) Ask thou thyself if thou art looking for Jesus, or another: if thou art setting thy hopes on Him, or on things created.

2. *Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see.* Matthew xi. 4.

How doth He thus answer their question? It is a proof that resteth not on boastful words but on the evidence of deeds. At the very time when John's disciples arrived, the Lord was healing the blind, the lame, the lepers, the deaf, raising the dead, and preaching to the poor. His deeds are His answer. Dost thou profess the imitation of Christ? It is not enough to make that bare assertion: thou must prove it by thy works. He *who shall try your works* (Wisdom vi. 3) will not be satisfied with words. Take heed that thy works correspond to thy vocation.

3. *Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.* Matthew xi. 6.

This further spake He that John might take occasion to warn them beforehand, and instruct them concerning His Passion, lest when the time came they might be offended by His humiliation and His suffering of contumely and death. But for thy sake also is it

spoken, lest, when thou wouldest imitate Jesus, thou shouldest be ashamed of humiliation, contempt, suffering, and the like. If after His great example thou shunnest such things, then indeed by these very things it is thou who art offended and made to fall.

TUESDAY

JOHN IS APPROVED BY CHRIST.

1. *What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? . . . A man clothed in soft raiment? . . .* Matthew xi. 7, 8.

John's question might have led the multitudes to suppose that he who had proclaimed that Jesus was the Messiah had changed his mind, or at least had begun to doubt. Jesus therefore applaudeth him for his constancy, for that he is no *reed, shaken* hither and thither *by the wind*, and for the hardness of his discipline, so powerful to foster strength of mind. Contrast their own inconstancy: thou risest up, thou beginnest to subdue thy passions; thou leavest off again: thou determinest to do well; then when the time for action cometh, thou doest nothing: thou withdrawest from created things; and so soon returnest to them again. Lament the past: amend thy ways.

2. *Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face.* Matthew xi. 9, 10.

More than a prophet, because he predicted not the Christ but shewed Him; a *messenger*, because he duly exercised the office of Forerunner. The only praise which Christ will give a faithful servant is that he hath fulfilled his office; but that is praise indeed. Not he that holdeth the greater office is the more worthy of praise, but he that administereth it the

more exactly. What hast thou to do with others? Fulfil that duty which obedience layeth on thyself. Art thou diligent in this? Mark where thou fallest short. Let thy fidelity be the measure of thy desire for the praise of God.

3. *Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.* Matthew xi. 11.

High praise indeed for John: but praise whereof he shewed himself worthy. God can praise nothing unless it be praiseworthy. That thou mayest thus be worthy is indeed God's act, yet thou must do thy part. To be praised by Christ would give thee joy. That joy thou mayest have if thou wilt imitate John's constancy, his strictness of life (which importeth mortification of thyself), his zeal to glorify Christ, and the angelical conversation of Christ's messenger.

WEDNESDAY

THE CONVERSION OF A SINFUL WOMAN.

1. *A woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box.* Luke vii. 37.

This woman's licentious life was a scandal in the city: but God, who willeth not the death of a sinner, touched her heart. In His goodness He loveth her even while she offendeth against Him. He gave her faith to apprehend Him, illumination to see herself and all her sin, prudence to recognize her opportunity. Without delay she hasteneth thither, recking nothing of the strange house, the banquet, the assembled company. How many a lesson mayest thou learn from her! To make more frequent acts of faith; to know thyself; to seize the first occasion for thy good; to be generous in resolution; to pay

no regard to men when thy salvation is concerned. Hadst thou but taken heed to all these hitherto!

2. *And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head. . . . Luke vii. 38.*

Behind him. In humility and confusion of face she will not meet the eyes of Christ: for the gazing guests she careth not a whit. When thou art put to shame it is men's eyes that thou avoidest. Such is thy pride. See love and grief provide a very fount of tears to wash the feet of Christ! What lack of love and grief in thee that thou canst not shed one drop! Now let His great goodness rouse thee to these same affections.

3. *And kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Luke vii. 38.*

Each instrument of sin is pressed into the service of devotion. And would that thou wouldest *make a laudable oblation unto God of all that thou hast so shamefully displayed in the sight of men, and find in every delight thou hast enjoyed material for sacrifice* (S. Gregory). But all the while Christ was purifying her soul, and quenching the love of created things. Now shed thy tears in sincerity to quench at last self-love and creature-love.

THURSDAY

CHRIST DEFENDETH THE WOMAN.

1. *The Pharisee . . . spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. Luke vii. 39.*

In this one judgment how many errors be com-

bined! (1) That Christ is no prophet. (2) That He knoweth not the woman's way of life. (3) That contrite as she is she is still a sinner. (4) That Christ ought to have repelled her. (5) That a righteous man becometh unclean if a sinner toucheth him. Every rash judgment is an error, yea, and a grievous one. Do thou bring thyself before the bar. If thou canst see Christ in the person of thy neighbour, thou wilt have a better mind concerning him.

2. *Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she . . . Luke vii. 44.*

Both Christ Himself and the woman had been judged by the Pharisee: He undertaketh her cause, but saith nothing to defend Himself. The woman likewise holdeth her peace. If thou be murmured at, be silent: God will speak for thee. He is the Truth, and will not speak as man speaketh. He seeth what thou art; not what thy neighbour judgeth thee to be. Fear His Judgment: fear not that of men.

3. *Thy sins are forgiven.* Luke vii. 48.

What was her joy to hear that word! Here is consolation indeed; but see how all depended on love; *for she loved much*. Ah, if I could but be accounted worthy to hear the same! Worthy I should be if I loved much. Yet mark: It is not a little love but *much* that I must give to God. In this way at least I must love Him much, that I set Him before all created things. Consider now: dost thou so love God? Ponder how much thou carest for God, and how much for thyself: note thine affection for God, and for created things. Hope not for forgiveness, if thou give not love.

FRIDAY

A BLIND AND DUMB DEVIL IS CAST OUT.

1. *Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.* Matthew xii. 22.

The devil in his cunning seizeth upon those bodily senses which are the avenue to man's final end (for *faith cometh by hearing*, Romans x. 17) and to the knowledge of God (*for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made*, Romans i. 20). What good may we then hope for if we have no way by which to attain to the knowledge of God? Beware therefore that the devil seize not upon these senses. Harken to God's word, that thou mayest be learned in the same: see in created things the uncreated God. Ponder the loving-kindness of this cure, unasked but freely proffered. What will He not do for thee if thou ask with ardour? He knoweth well that the Pharisees will murmur: what of that? If thou pay attention to the words of men, thou wilt never be truly the servant of God.

2. *But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils.* Luke xi. 15.

An envious mind ever sucketh poison from the best of fruit. They could not deny that the man had been set free from the devil: therefore they attribute it to a secret compact between the devil and Christ. When thou considerest this so grievous imputation against Christ Himself, why dost thou marvel at the little judgments falsely framed of thee? Art thou holier than thy God? Consider rather how Christ then bare Himself. He could take vengeance, yet He doth not so, nor is He moved to wrath. Instead

thereof He quietly confuteth their calumnious charge, shewing that the devils cast not each other out. Dost thou so bear thyself when men speak evil of thee? Dost thou remain unperturbed? Dost thou take it patiently? Dost thou refute it regarding only the honour of God, or from the fear of thine own dishonour?

3. *If I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.* Luke xi. 20.

Christ casteth not out devils by Beelzebub: therefore He casteth them out by the power of God; for there is no other power to avail against them. See with what care thou must exclude the devil from entering thy heart, since thou hast no power to thrust him out again. Keep watch then over the doors of sense: they be his favoured ways of approach. Give way to sense in nothing further than reason may rightfully allow.

SATURDAY

THE SIGN OF JONAS THE PROPHET.

1. *Master, we would see a sign from thee.* Matthew xii. 38.

A shameless demand indeed! They have seen the dead raised up, sicknesses cured, the blind and the deaf restored to sight and hearing; and they yet ask a sign: not seeking faith but tempting the Master. Likewise dost thou behave thyself to Godward. That which cannot come to pass in the course of providence thou askest Him to bring about by a mere act of power: to enter the kingdom of God without violence; to be delivered from temptation without resisting it; to acquire a virtue without using the

means thereunto. In so doing thou temptest God : what shamelessness is here !

2. *There shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.* Matthew xii. 39.

That is, the sign of His own death : that thou mayest know that as *Christ ought to have suffered, and by violence to enter into his glory* (Luke xxiv. 26), so neither canst thou attain the same except by force. Thou hast need then of courage and of generous resolution. Behold the cause of thy miserable failure. See how lukewarm are thy resolves ! what wonder if there be no result ?

3. *The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it.* Matthew xii. 41.

The Ninevites, barbarians and Gentiles, repented at the preaching of Jonas. Hear our Lord say to thee, The lay people shall rise and put thee to shame, who received not the grace of God in vain, but brought forth fruit by faith and good works. And what doest thou, thou slothful clergyman ? Seekest thou a sign ? Is the grace of thy vocation no sign ? Hast thou no sign in all God's inspirations ? in good examples ? in warnings ?

THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

WHO ARE THE MOTHER AND BRETHREN OF JESUS ?

1. *Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.* Matthew xii. 47.

S. Jerome teacheth us that so informing Him they laid a snare to see if he would prefer the claim of flesh and blood to the work of the Spirit. But Christ sheweth indignation and maketh answer, *Who is my*

mother? and who are my brethren? as though He would say, I have no concern with my mother when I am about God's business. Hast thou likewise put away all carnal affection? Dost thou yield nothing to the flesh in derogation to the rights of God? Beware, and listen to those words: *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me* (Matthew x. 37).

2. *And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!* Matthew xii. 49.

He that by faith is already brother or sister to Christ, saith S. Gregory, *becometh also his mother by preaching of him, if through his words the love of Christ is born in his neighbour's breast.* Such is the honour bestowed upon the apostolic man : he is made mother unto Christ through his work of preaching, of converting, of kindling in men's hearts the love of Christ. Kindle in thee this spirit of apostolate, that thou mayest stand possessed of this high honour.

3. *Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.* Matthew xii. 50.

Christ's meaning is that there is a spiritual kinship between Himself and them that do the will of His Father. *Friendship with Christ*, saith S. Chrysostom, *is this and nothing else, that thou do the will of God.* And to such friendship there succeedeth an affection yet more tender. Thou seest then the reward of obedience. Thy superiors speak in the name of God, by whom they were ordained : refuse not their behests. Let this be thy motive that for thine obedience Christ will love thee.

MONDAY

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER AND THE SEED.

1. *A sower went out.* Luke viii. 5.

(1) The sower is God, who *went out* in His goodness when He gave Himself to the creatures of His hand, in His power when He made them, in His providence when He foreordained their paths. Stand thou amazed at this His goodness, bow before His power, commit thyself to the ordering of His providence. (2) The sower is Christ, who *came forth from the Father, and is come into the world*, being incarnate for the love of us: own thou this love, and render it again. (3) The sower is every apostolic man, who goeth out to seek the salvation of his neighbour. For this he needeth zeal and stable virtue, lest while he seeketh another's salvation he lose his own. Behold how great in thy vocation is thy need to lay up a store of such stable virtues! Mark those thou lackest.

2. *To sow his seed.* Luke viii. 5.

(1) The seed is God's creatures, and the field, the world. In this field thou too hast been sown. Remember then thy Creator and thy Master. (2) The seed is the blood and the merits of Christ, and all the graces that flow from them: the ground is the soul of men, the barren and the fertile too: for there is none to whom they be not offered. O marvellous goodness of God! O wretched barrenness of so many souls! (3) The seed is the doctrine of the Gospel and the inspiration of the soul: the field is the mind, whether it be barren, and stay at the mere apprehension of this seed, or fertile, and pass it on to move the will. What care shouldest thou take to feed the mind with heavenly principles! With what reverence shouldest thou receive God's inspirations!

3. *As he sowed, some fell by the way side.* Luke viii. 5.

The unfruitful ground is of three kinds. The way side is the soul that expendeth itself on created things, unrecollected, open to all worldly thoughts which pass along and like wayfarers tread down good inspirations. Thus it cometh to pass that there is no savour for spiritual things: an hour of prayer seemeth a year; thou wilt hardly await its ending that thou mayest return to the consolations of thy choice. Wretched the soul which maketh itself a channel for all except God! Hedge round thy path then with hourly prayer at the least, and during the day give diligent heed to the resolves of the morning.

TUESDAY

THE SAME PARABLE CONTINUED.

1. *Some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.* Luke viii. 6.

The rocky ground is the soul that is hardened in evil habits, accustomed to live by the senses. Thus hath it but little feeling of devotion, so that a thousand resolutions, a thousand truths recognized, find no root: the first movement of love or fear or respect of persons is enough to dry them up. Such an one is ever beginning and as soon making an end. If thou art such, what wilt thou do when the Husbandman cometh and demandeth fruit from His field? Conclude then with how much care thou must subdue thine evil habits.

2. *Some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.* Luke viii. 7.

The thorny ground is the soul that is immersed in

business, and oppressed with unprofitable cares : whose last thought is for self, for God, and for eternity ; which acknowledgeth indeed all heavenly truths, but because of studies and earthly duties and the like affordeth not the time to let them grow unto maturity. Unhappy the soul that suffereth God's Spirit to be choked ! that letteth the time that should be given to God be filched away by earthly studies or excessive love of human intercourse ! Dost thou now understand how needful it is to set a bound to all earthly cares ?

3. *Other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit*, Luke viii. 8 ; *some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold* ; so addeth Matthew xiii. 8.

Here thou hast the soul that is good, or even right excellent. See how it differeth from those others : it *heareth the word* of God with eagerness ; it *understandeth it* by pondering and directing it to action ; it *bringeth forth fruit with patience* and resolution, overcoming all difficulties. Such shouldest thou be, right excellent ground, such that no particle of good should fail to find a lodging, striving with all thy powers after that virtuous life which is well pleasing to God : not content to yield thirtyfold, but striving ever to produce a hundredfold, to seek for the greater and ever greater glory of God.

WEDNESDAY

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES.

1. *A man . . . sowed good seed in his field : but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat.* Matthew xiii. 24, 25.

The devil, the world and the flesh endeavour to corrupt God's seed, though sown in the best of ground ; and so subtilly they work that it is hard to

distinguish the good seed from the tares while they be yet in the blade : self-love is ever ready with a counterfeit. If thou hast aught of good in thee mark how it is mingled with evil, with respect of persons, with mixed motives, with the love of thyself. This cometh to pass *while men sleep*, at those times when they keep no serious watch upon themselves. Watch thou this way and that.

2. *But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. Matthew xiii. 26—28.*

Hear this word spoken unto thee : In the blade of thy first discipleship thou didst seem good seed ; now appear the tares in thee, and the high hope of thee perisheth. What were thy mind if thou wert so rebuked? Who is this enemy? (1) Thyself in thine indulged self-love. (2) Thy friends : for inasmuch as thou hast joined thyself to those who are more full of lightness than of the Spirit, thou hast contracted the like behaviour.

3. *The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Matthew xiii. 28, 29.*

See how God hath patience with thy defects ; so likewise thy superiors and thy companions. Again and again they bear with them, lest thou shouldest be altogether rooted up : yet ever with hope of thine amendment. If this ensue not, thou must fear that *in the time of harvest*, that is of thy death, God may say, *Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them with fire.* If thou regard this now with holy fear, then shalt thou have a surer hope.

THURSDAY

THE PARABLE OF THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED.

1. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds.* Matthew xiii. 31, 32.

This grain is the truths of the Gospel. How lowly and despised are these in the eyes of the world! Blessed are the poor; blessed are they which be persecuted; riches are but thorns; the yoke of Christ is easy; and the like. Yet these be the seed which must be sown within the soul by lively apprehension and inward digestion. Tell me, *Wherefore is the whole land of thy soul made desolate? Because no man layeth it to heart* (Jeremiah xii. 11). Judge not this doctrine as thou hast done, with a fleshly mind.

2. *But when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree.* Matthew xiii. 32.

If thou sow these truths in a good heart, and study to understand them, then will they grow into a tree, and will bear fruit of honour and of beauty, sweet to the mouth of Jesus. Contrariwise the false principles of the world and of the flesh bear their own loathsome fruits. Ponder this truth: and give thyself the more entirely to penetrate the very inner meaning of Christ's teaching, with deep desire to carry out the same.

3. *So that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.* Matthew xiii. 32.

These birds be those holy affections of union with God which are like to arise within the soul when Christ's teaching hath been fully understood. For hence cometh a desire to please God and fulfil all His will, as well in difficulty and adversity as in ease and prosperity. Now mayest thou know whence cometh thine own poverty in generous aspiration.

FRIDAY

THE PARABLES OF THE TREASURE, THE PEARL, AND THE NET.

1. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid. Matthew xiii. 44.*

This is evangelical perfection; it is called treasure for the richness of graces that appertain unto it; but it is hid from the eyes of the world and of the imperfect who care not for it. *The which when a man hath found, he hideth.* Makest thou no such search? *For joy thereof goeth.* Dost thou fail to find thy joy in the things which belong unto perfection, seeking it yet in vanities and sensual delights? *Selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.* Dost thou refuse to forsake all? Dost thou still cleave to thyself in thy self-love, and to created things? And in the end what wilt thou find in thy hands?

2. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls. Matthew xiii. 45.*

Thou too art a merchant; and God hath said to thee, *Occupy till I come* (Luke xix. 13). But of what sort? Seekest thou this world's trash, or the pearls of heaven? The goodliest pearl of all is the love of God, or union with Him. What doest thou to gain it? This man *went and sold all that he had.* Thou likewise must go away from self, and withdraw thine affection from created things, since such affection is an obstacle to perfect love. How far hast thou been from this! So is thy heart stone cold. If even now thou couldst begin!

3. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind. Matthew xiii. 47.*

This net is the Church militant on earth, whereby in the sea of this world God catcheth good and bad

and indifferent. True thou art in the net: but flatter not thyself; that meaneth not that thou art either good or safe; both these depend on thine own efforts and fervency. Bestir thyself in time. Slowly the net is drawn to the shore of eternity. *The good shall be gathered into vessels, but the bad shall be cast away.* Make thyself worthy of the better lot.

SATURDAY

CHRIST IS UNWELCOME IN HIS OWN COUNTRY.

1. *And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue.* Matthew xiii. 54.

Christ's own country is Nazareth, where He lived until His thirtieth year. He chose not that place for the first preaching of the Gospel, for there He would have been held in contempt, if at one leap He had left the carpenter's bench for the teacher's chair. It was His will therefore to gain repute as He went through other cities, and so dispose their hearts to invite His presence and make Him welcome. What then hast thou to do? Remove all hindrances: acquire merit.

2. *Insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? . . . And they were offended in him.* Matthew xiii. 54, 55, 57.

When they should have rejoiced at all the wisdom and power shewn forth by their own Citizen, and the crowds which followed Him everywhere to do Him honour, behold, they have indignation! What graces He had showered on Nazareth! Here was He incarnate; here He dwelt; here He displayed the example of His life. Now He suffereth contempt for His lowly estate as the carpenter's son. Even so, O Jesus, they ever use Thee worst who owe Thee most.

Ungrateful soul, recall the graces thou hast received. And how hast thou used thy God? If not by thy words, by thine actions thou hast despised His doctrine, for thou hast refused to follow it.

3. *And thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill . . . that they might cast him down headlong.* Luke iv. 29.

Because He would do there no miracles, as He had done in Capernaum. He would not do them, because He loved His own country, lest the very miracles should increase their punishment; for He knew that they would not believe them. Think then of the many signs and graces He sheweth in thy case: beware that they serve not but to increase thy punishment. Ungrateful soul! as often as thou refusest grace thou thrustest Christ out of the city. And as often as thou castest thyself down headlong, who art His image, it is Christ whom thou wouldest so cast down.

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE APOSTLES ARE SENT FORTH AND TAUGHT HOW THEY
MUST PREACH.

1. *And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Matthew x. 7.

This is the subject for dealings with thy neighbour. Wherever thou art, fill men's minds with God's kingdom and the means thereunto. Be rid of other conversation, useless, and dissipating the powers of the soul, whereby thou burdenest thine own conscience, wastest thy time, failest to edify thy neighbour. But if such is to be thy converse with thy neighbour, thou must first make it thy habitual topic

with thyself : in meditation and in thy private words press ever on the kingdom and the means thereto.

2. *Heal the sick.* Matthew x. 8.

Heal them by spiritual consolation : *raise the dead* (in sin) by exhortation or by absolution ; *cleanse the lepers*, even them that infect others by false doctrine or bad example, by bringing them to penitence ; *cast out devils*, evil habits, public vices ; and see that no sin go unpunished. *Freely ye have received, freely give*, not seeking your own profit. Examine thy dealings with thy neighbour if they be of this sort, and ask thyself if thine apostolic vocation demandeth not the same.

3. *Take nothing for your journey, neither staves.* Luke ix. 3.

No staves to defend yourselves against assault ; *nor scrip*, to carry food ; *neither bread*, not even for necessity ; *neither money* ; *neither two coats apiece*, for splendour or display. So God disposeth for His dearest friends, whom He will have joined closest to Himself, and therefore altogether withdrawn from affection and care for earthly things. Never canst thou enjoy union with God until thou art separate from created things. Poor wretch, why wilt thou cleave to thine own torment?

MONDAY

HE PREDICTETH TO THE APOSTLES THE PERSECUTIONS
THEY SHALL SUFFER.

1. *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.* Matthew x. 16.

And ye must suffer the fate of sheep among wolves. Fearless courage is needed if we would preach the Gospel. *They will deliver you up to the councils, and*

they will scourge you in their synagogues. . . . And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. How standeth thy mind towards this? Fearest thou? Be of good courage. Remember, I send you forth: I who will give the crown of victory.

2. *The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. Matthew x. 24.*

It is the example of thy Lord and Master Jesus that must hearten thee in every persecution. What persecutions did He not endure in all His innocence! Shalt thou fare better? When thou hast something to endure, think this again and again, Jesus is my Master: I am His servant. What glory to share His lot!

3. *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. Matthew x. 28.*

The conclusion is that even death hath no terror if it be endured for the glory of God: for it cannot hurt the soul. Art thou thus great-hearted? Happy wert thou, if thou couldst lay down thy life for the service of God! Thou speakest in praise of others who met this fate: why then dost thou not truly long for it thyself? Is there no tyrant to inflict it on thee? Then for this present be thine own: deprive thy lusts of their noxious life.

TUESDAY

HE WARNETH THE APOSTLES THAT THEY BE NOT
HINDERED BY DOMESTIC AFFECTION.

1. *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. Matthew x. 34.*

There is a peace which is good, the same which Christ left with His Apostles when He would ascend

into heaven. But there is a peace which is bad, specially for apostolic men, and resteth on nothing but the love of kin. God will have this peace broken, and he that would keep it declareth war on God. Consider how such love impedeth the apostolic man. How art thou distressed to part from thy kindred! How dost thou pine for them! how readily to please them thou breakest thy rule of life! How art thou afflicted in their affliction! How lightly thou exultest in their prosperity!

2. *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father.* Matthew x. 35.

The sword which setteth a man at variance against his father is the law of loving God above all things. If thou observe this, there remaineth nothing whereunto thou mayest cleave in love, for all thy love is given to Him. Hitherto it appeareth not that thou hast taken the sword against thy passions. Flesh and blood still weigh heavy for thee. When thou tookest priesthood upon thee it was time for thee to use this sword, and still thou delayest. Thou must go back to the beginning. Yea, make the true beginning even now.

3. *A man's foes shall be they of his own household.* Matthew x. 36.

How truly He spake! Who are they of thy household if not thy kinsfolk? And are they not thy foes and lead thee to give to them the whole or the greater part of that love thou owest to God? What right hast thou to steal thy heart from God? Who is more of thy household than thyself? And who is a worse foe? Remember the deep and mortal wounds which thou hast dealt thyself. Now treat thyself as thou wouldest treat an enemy if thou hadst him in thy power.

WEDNESDAY

OF THOSE WHOM CHRIST PRONOUNCETH TO BE
UNWORTHY OF HIM.

1. *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Matthew x. 37.*

Thou wilt never own to this: yet will I convince thee. Tell me, Lovest thou God? I do, thou sayest. More than all things? Yea. Then to serve Him thou shouldest forsake father or friend: yea, thou shouldest refrain thyself from that too frequent visiting of them which serveth but to dissipate thy spiritual life. But, thou sayest, I cannot be so churlish. Seest thou now where lieth thy chief love? And fearest thou not that awful doom, that thou art not worthy of God?

2. *He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. Matthew x. 38.*

Love ariseth between them that be like-minded. He then that will be worthy of Christ's love let him seek to have the mind of Christ. But Christ's whole life was one long cross. If thou bearest not the cross thou followest Him not, hast not His mind, and therefore art not His beloved. Seest thou then how the cross and a mortified life are not merely useful means to thy true end but right necessary thereto? O soft and coward soul, how thou shrinkest from the mere thought of crucifixion! Come now: *if thou wilt be Christ's, crucify thy flesh with its affections and lusts.*

3. *He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. Matthew x. 39.*

So then there is but one way of saving the soul and obtaining life: that is to lose one's life for God's sake. Thou lovest it thus in two ways: (1) If thou so bear about in thy flesh the dying of Jesus that the life

also of Jesus may be made manifest in thee. Hard is this, but needful. (2) If by love thou let thy life pass into the life of Jesus; so that thou mayest say, *I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me* (Galatians ii. 20). But O how blessedly thou shalt find it, since thou shalt find thyself in Christ!

THURSDAY

WE MUST TAKE UPON US THE EASY YOKE OF CHRIST.

1. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you.* Matthew xi. 28, 29.

How kind is God who so inviteth us! How good is He who delivereth us from the weight of sins that presseth us down to hell! How should we love Him who giveth us rest when we faint by the way! But what is this rest that He provideth? *Take my yoke.* So it is then, Jesus: thou givest thine own people rest by laying thy yoke upon them. Yea, even so: there can be no true or lasting consolation in this life but in the cross of Jesus wherein alone *it behoveth us to glory*. Ah, wretched man, behold thine error, thou that fleest the cross, and suest elsewhere for empty consolations!

2. *Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* Matthew xi. 29.

Behold, Christ offereth to be thy teacher: what better one dost thou desire? Close thine ears against the false teaching of the world, and hearken to Jesus. It is meet that thou shouldest find rest for a soul that is weary in the paths of sin by meekness and by humility. The one feeleth injury without resentment: the other bringeth thee into subjection to God, and to man for God's sake. See then wherefore Christ's

yoke seemeth heavy unto thee, and sometimes thou losest tranquillity of mind : it is because thou bearest not this yoke with meekness and humility.

3. *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* Matthew xi. 30.

This yoke is the law of the Gospel, or else adversity and persecution, or else the spirit's anguish in its struggle against the flesh. He calleth it *His* yoke, because, whichever it be, He beareth it with us giving us the help of His grace. *Cleave then unto God, and constantly endure* (Ecclesiasticus ii. 3, 2). Murmur not at its weight, when God Himself sustaineth the greater part.] Now is the occasion for a generous resolve.

FRIDAY

JOHN THE BAPTIST IS PUT TO DEATH IN PRISON.

1. *Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords . . . and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in and danced . . . he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.* Mark vi. 21—23.

See the madness of one that for the favour of a dancing wench promiseth her half of his kingdom ! But thine is the greater who for one moment of pleasure hast renounced the kingdom of heaven.

2. *And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.* Matthew xiv. 8.

She asketh counsel of John's enemy : what wonder if that counsel is for his death ? But more blameworthy art thou if askest counsel in thine affairs from the world, or the flesh, or thine own passions. How often have they instructed thee to ask the head not of

John but of Christ! As often as thou sinnest, so far as in thee lieth thou puttest Christ to death, inasmuch as thou renewest the cause for which He was slain. [Thou fool, in thine affairs take counsel of reason, not of appetite.]

3. *And the king was exceeding sorry.* Mark vi. 26.

Because he had a regard for John, and now recognized his own insanity. Be not precipitate in decision. [Think beforehand of what thou doest, and when it is done thou shalt not repent of it.] *For his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.* He feareth to break his rash and wicked oath, yet feareth not to shed innocent blood. He will not reject a light woman, yet feareth not to offend God. Dost thou not so indulge thy carnal appetite? *And he . . . beheaded him,* when he knew him to be holy and guiltless. What wickedness may be caused by one untamed passion! How many hast thou, still unsubdued!

SATURDAY

FIVE THOUSAND MEN ARE SATISFIED WITH FIVE LOAVES
AND TWO SMALL FISHES.

1. *His disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go . . . and buy themselves victuals.* Matthew xiv. 15.

How constant and fervent that multitude in listening to Christ! but thou, how languid, and careless of His inspirations! The disciples' anxiety displayeth their little faith. They ask that the multitude be sent away to buy victuals. They say that two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient, and the like. But do thou set all thy confidence in God, and

specially in troubles which no human strength can cure. Say with all thy heart *The poor committeth himself unto thee* (Psalm x. 14).

2. *And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass.* Matthew xiv. 19.

He willeth that they whom He feedeth with His grace should dispose themselves in quietness and humble knowledge of their insufficiency. He *took the loaves, and . . . distributed . . . to them that were set down . . . as much as they would* (John vi. 11). In Christ's hands the loaves are multiplied. Small though the gift be that thou hast offered in sincerity of heart, thou shalt receive it back with usury. If thou receivest nothing, it is not God that is parsimonious, but thyself, who hast given nothing into His hands. Deprive thyself of the slightest pleasure for the love of Him, and He will repay thy soul with somewhat incomparably greater.]

3. *When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed . . . into a mountain.* John vi. 15.

See the gratitude of that multitude. They had received a miraculous blessing; therefore they proclaimed Him *a great prophet* and would have made him *a king*. How great is thine ingratitude, if thou abuse the very graces of Christ to thwart His will! See how Christ fleeth from honours. He hasteneth to the cross, which *with desire he hath desired: He was offered in sacrifice because he himself so willed*. He fleeth from honours: thou seekest for them. Art thou not ashamed?

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

CHRIST WALKING ON THE WATER.

1. *The ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves. . . . And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.* Matthew xiv. 24, 25.

All night they toiled; for the wind was contrary. The Lord beheld them from the mountain, but came not yet to their help, *teaching us* (as S. Chrysostom saith) that we must not look for our labours to be eased immediately (for it was to such labours that He had appointed them); but await the appointed time, and in the meanwhile gallantly resist the storm. Jesus would teach thee the same lesson in every storm of adversity or passion. What doest thou when the winds are contrary to thy salvation? How dost thou maintain the struggle? Dost thou not lay aside the oar, and resign thyself to the dominance of thine affections?

2. *And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit.* Matthew xiv. 26.

They suppose the true presence of Christ to be an illusion because He walketh upon the waves. [How often dost thou suppose that an inspiration of God is but an illusion, when it moves upon the sea of thine affections, or biddeth thee trample the sea of the world beneath thy feet with generous contempt!] And because thou reckonest it an illusion thou sufferest thyself rather to be overwhelmed by the waves of this world. See in how many respects thine imagination needeth to be corrected. [Thy difficulties stand not in thy circumstances, but in thine imagination]

3. *But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I: be not afraid.* Matthew xiv. 27.

It was Jesus who had brought them into this danger; for, as saith Mark vi. 45, *he constrained them to get into the ship*, when they were safe on land. Wherefore also He cometh to their aid. Into whatever difficulties obedience leadeth thee, *be of good cheer*: it is God who laid the burden upon thee. *Be not afraid*: He will not desert thee. Only do thou thy part.

MONDAY

PETER WALKING ON THE WATER.

1. *Peter . . . said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the water.* Matthew xiv. 28.

This is the word of a love that can brook no delay in coming unto Christ. He asketh to be bidden, being fully assured that obedience will supply what is lacking unto human powers, and believing that Christ's command will make him safe *on the water* and in every danger. *And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.* Behold his fervour and courage when Jesus giveth the word. Hadst thou the like confidence, what couldest thou not achieve in the strength of obedience?

2. *But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid.* Matthew xiv. 30.

From the height of confidence he slips into distrust. And thus indeed we change our minds unless again and again we firmly re-establish our resolves. *And beginning to sink.* It was not the wind which put him in peril but fear that arose out of distrust. Never shalt thou do any great work if thou stand not firm in fullest confidence. Inasmuch as thou canst do nothing of thyself, thou must by confidence be united with Him who can do all things. *He cried . . . Lord,*

save me. So he cried in the first moment of doubtfulness. In temptation he delayeth not to flee to God.

3. *And immediately.* Matthew xiv. 31.

Nor doth Jesus delay to help him. He *stretched forth his hand*, preventing Peter, and caught him. Behold the loving-kindness of Jesus and His power; and put thy trust in them. *And said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* He would have him know that it was his little faith and not the wind that caused his danger. How often dost thou shew thyself of little faith, when thou avoidest a duty because it is difficult! [When thou beginnest to be afraid of high and arduous resolve, say to thyself, O thou of little faith, doubt not.]

TUESDAY

THE DISCIPLES BEING ACCUSED OF UNWASHEN HANDS
ARE DEFENDED BY CHRIST.

1. *Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?* Matthew xv. 2.

The Pharisees, devoted to outward cleanliness and careless of that which is within, tax the disciples with not washing their hands before taking food. Is this indeed a weighty matter? But grave it is that ye yourselves be inly full of all uncleanness. Be not thou a Pharisee, devoted to the 'outside, neglecting that which is within. God judgeth not what lieth before the eyes of men, but what remaineth in the hidden places of the heart. Of this then take the greater heed.

2. *He answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?* Matthew xv. 3.

What tradition was this? That sustenance might be refused to a man's parents, so that he might offer sacrifice to God. Herein therefore He condemneth those who break a Divine command under a cloke of religion. What then will He say unto thee if thou breakest thy rule to please men, or to accommodate thyself to others' disposition? Thou wilt never be able to excuse thyself, for thou canst conceive of nothing which may be preferred to God.

3. *Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.* Matthew xv. 7, 8.

He sheweth how that they themselves are more guilty than the disciples, since for all their scruples they serve not God from the heart and with the affections. Now art not thou in this same condemnation? Aimest thou not at eye-service rather than God's good pleasure? Thou devotest thyself to feigned virtues, but riddest not thyself of those ill affections which defile the soul.

WEDNESDAY

A WOMAN OF CANAAN DRAWETH NEAR TO CHRIST TO
INTERCEDE FOR HER DAUGHTER.

1. *And, behold, a woman of Canaan.* Matthew xv. 22.

Hearing that Christ was coming, straightway she *came out of the same coasts*, and seized the opportunity. Thus she instructeth thee how thou must put thyself in the way of grace, lest it pass thee by. She *cried unto him . . . Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David.* Full of faith and hope, she layeth bare her sorrow for her daughter's evil plight: *my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.* Content to have so

done she asketh nothing. She believeth in the power of the Omnipotent, and the goodwill of the All-good : for the rest she committeth herself to Him. See how a heathen woman putteth thee to shame with such high virtue.

2. *But he answered her not a word.* Matthew xv. 23.

Delaying, as saith Euthymius, *for the full manifestation of the woman's faith and modesty and prudence.* If God delayeth to give thee thy requests, thou mayest believe that He willeth to give thee scope for new virtues in thy continued asking. Grow not weary then, but shew thyself importunate. *His disciples*, in pity, *besought him, saying, Send her away.* But wherefore? that she might receive consolation in her affliction? that God might be glorified by a miracle? No : *For she crieth after us.* Being yet imperfect they make a reason of their own annoyance. Hast thou not the like imperfection? thou prayest to be delivered from evil; but not so much for God's pleasure as thine own.

3. *But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* Matthew xv. 24.

Nothing seems to be gained either by her own crying or by the disciples' prayer. The gentle Lord giveth her a yet sterner answer and seemeth to repel her openly. None the less hope once conceived abideth firm, and desire is yet the more inflamed. That is what giveth to the Heart of Jesus its deepest joy. Though rejected, be not cast down : though repelled, draw near again. Perseverance alone will gain thee thy request. Hast thou come, Lord, after the lost sheep? That then is my consolation : for it is I that *have gone astray like a sheep that is lost* (Psalm cxix. 176).

THURSDAY

THE WOMAN OF CANAAN'S DAUGHTER IS HEALED.

1. *Then*, with wondrous constancy, *came she* (Matthew xv. 25), as full of confidence as of desire, *and worshipped him*, in deepest humility: *saying*, with shamefastness, *Lord*, whom all things obey, according to Thy power, *help me*, afflicted in my daughter's evil plight. How many a virtue goeth with this prayer! *But he answered and said*, *It is not meet to take the children's bread*, those miraculous favours promised to the Jews as children, *and to cast it to dogs*, even the idolatrous Gentiles. A bitter answer indeed, unlike the speech of Christ! How dost thou bear thyself when one meeteth thee with a sharp word, or repelleth thee a second time? And how did she?

2. *And she*, with no sense of hurt (such as thou wouldest not try to hide) without murmuring (into which thou wouldest assuredly have broken forth), *said*, *Truth, Lord*: with prudence and humility she acknowledgeth herself under the figure of a dog, and straightway claimeth to be treated as so good a master would treat his dogs: *Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table* (Matthew xv. 27). Behold her constancy, patience, prudence, humbleness, faith.

3. *Then Jesus*, overcome by her constancy and humility, *said unto her* (Matthew xv. 28), after the manner of one that marvelled, to teach them that stood by, and to strengthen the faith of the many while He lifteth up the one, *O woman*: no longer a dog of the Gentiles; thy changed affections merit a change of name. *Thou hast known thyself for a dog: I hail thee as a child of man* (so saith S. Austin). *Great is thy faith*: not that faith stood alone; yet that He singled out because it was her master-virtue.

Be it unto thee even as thou wilt: as if He said, Dispose of my power at thy pleasure. Here hast thou a sure token of God's goodness. Hope and rely thereon.

FRIDAY

A MAN THAT IS DEAF AND DUMB IS HEALED.

1. *He took him* (Mark vii. 33) (a man that was deaf and dumb, brought by others) *aside from the multitude.* The remedy for the deaf and dumb in spirit is to remove from the clamour of the world and of evil affections and from all light behaviour; and so to retire within themselves with lowly consideration of their own vileness. In such solitude the soul can better hear the voice of God. *And put his fingers into his ears* to close them to vanity: and this is a second remedy, to fence the senses with the finger of God, which is the grace of the Holy Spirit, that they may no longer lie open to the seduction of the world. *And . . . touched his tongue,* moistening his finger with spittle, which representeth that grace which should henceforth rule his tongue. *And looking up to heaven:* here is the third remedy, to begin the consideration of heavenly things. *He sighed:* for the fourth remedy is aspiration after the same. Examine thyself, whether thou withdrawest thine affection from this world, rulest thy tongue, meditatest on heavenly things, and aspirest after them. See what thou shouldest amend.

2. *And saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.* Mark vii. 34.

How often saith He unto thee, *Open to me, my sister, my bride* (Solomon's Song v. 2). *And straightway his ears were opened.* But alas! the loosing of thy tongue is but for licence to speak vanity: it is a

tongue of iniquity. How long shall this continue? Wilt thou not at last make an end of thy shame?

3. *And he charged them that they should tell no man* (Mark vii. 36) as though to shew us how contrary to His mind is that display, to which peradventure thou givest more heed than unto God. *The more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it.* To wish to be unknown is praiseworthy in a benefactor: but the joy of the grateful is to value and proclaim the benefit. For how great things owest thou this gratitude to God! Saying, *He hath done all things well*, inasmuch as He can will nothing that is not well. Ah, if one day God should say of thee, *He hath done all things well*, how great thy consolation! Yet thou needest not save to labour for it, and it shall be thine.

SATURDAY

FOUR THOUSAND MEN ARE REFRESHED WITH SEVEN LOAVES.

1. *The multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus . . . saith* (to the disciples), *I have compassion on the multitude.* Mark viii. 1, 2.

Here is a mighty work of grace on the Lord's part that He drew so many to Himself. But on thy part so often thou resistest Him. *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh* (Hebrews xii. 25). Behold His tenderness and pity for the multitudes. (1) For their eager fervency in following after Him: *for divers of them came from far* (Mark viii. 3), and if they be sent away, *they will faint by the way.* (2) For their constancy: *because they have now been with me three days.* (3) For their patient endurance: *they have nothing to eat*, yet bear their hunger without murmuring. Thou hast the same good Master: why

trustest thou not thyself unto His providence? Hardly for an hour art thou with Him.

2. *If I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way.* Mark viii. 3.

Seest thou how the Lord careth for thee? Why then dost thou fear to live in this place or in that? What canst thou want if God is with thee? Fear rather lest thou be found wanting unto God. And wanting thou art if thou commit not thyself unto His providence. Yea, to thyself thou art found wanting, if in the place of God's providence thou in thy folly choosest thine own.

3. *And he took the seven loaves.* Mark viii. 6.

Such was the whole store of Jesus in His poverty and of His twelve disciples. *Gave to his disciples to set before them.* Consider what trust in God's providence was born in their hearts when they found that by His power those few loaves were enough for that great multitude. *So they did eat, and were filled.* Confidence never putteth to shame the trustful. Why then with this excessive thought for thy body dost thou strive to avoid the duty or the place commanded thee? Say boldly with Job, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him* (Job xiii. 15).

THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

WE MUST BEWARE OF THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES.

1. *And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.* Matthew xvi. 5.

What joy they found in converse with the Lord, insomuch that they forgot their necessary food! Would that thou wouldest lay aside this superfluous care for thy body! Soon wouldest thou so do, if

thou didst take more pleasure in conversing with God. Then Jesus said unto them, *Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*. Christ teacheth that we must take more care for the bread of the soul which is the word of God, and that we must take care that it be uncorrupt. Often after this manner the Lord maketh allusion to the things of the spirit, herein giving thee an ensample. *And they reasoned. . . . It is because we have taken no bread*. So they cling to their fruitless anxiety. So dealest thou with spiritual converse : either thou changest the matter for something of no value, or, if another bringeth in a holy matter, thou clingest yet to thine own levities.

2. *Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?* Matthew xvi. 8.

So condemneth He their anxiety for bread and carefulness for the things of the body. *Do ye not . . . remember the five loaves of the five thousand . . . neither the seven loaves of the four thousand*, and how they satisfied all who shared in them? As though He would say, Leave unto me the provision for your bodies ; and I will undertake it. Now if thou wouldest but resign thyself unto His providence, how easy were obedience, and poverty how pleasant, and suffering how desirable !

3. *How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees . . . ? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees*. Matthew xvi. 11, 12.

Behold the evil leaven : the maxims of the world and of self-love ; the principles of the old man. Beware then of this leaven : or else it will sour thy mind and spoil the savour of that heavenly bread which is to *do the will of the Father*.

MONDAY

A BLIND MAN IS CURED AT BETHSAIDA.

1. *They bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town.* Mark viii. 22, 23.

Wherefore healeth He him not in the place where He was? Bethsaida was a village wherein the Lord had done many signs and mighty works, and they still believed not. For this reason they are rebuked for not responding unto grace: *Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! . . .* The Lord therefore led the man out, signifying that there could be no healing without his co-operation. So standeth the case in every malady of the soul. What graces hast thou received! How slight hath been thy co-operation! And dost thou indeed wish to be made whole?

2. *And when he had spit on his eyes.* Mark viii. 23.

The spittle signifieth that first grace which should be the beginning of sight. *And put his hands upon him,* to signify His power, *he asked him if he saw ought.* He answered, *I see men as trees, walking.* Now hath he the beginnings of sight: but human things bulk large before him: men seem like great trees. One gleam of light sufficeth not to secure thee from false judgment. The sight is still confused: the things of this world seem great. And seem they not great to thee? If it be so, thou hast too little light. Pray to the Lord: *Lighten mine eyes* (Psalm xiii. 3).

3. *After that he put his hands again upon his eyes . . . and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.* Mark viii. 25.

Why doth Jesus delay his healing? Because the

blind man had but little faith and was not yet rightly disposed. He willed to increase his faith before He healed him. There must be the fitting disposition in thee before God can do His work upon thee. If God restraineth His good hand upon thee, look for the reason in thyself : it is because thou art not ready for a richer work of grace. Study then to dispose thyself for the receiving thereof, that thou mayest see all clearly how that the world and all creatures therein are but nothing, and God is all.

TUESDAY

PETER'S CONFESSION.

1. *He asked his disciples . . . Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?* Matthew xvi. 13.

(1) *He asked not from desire of vainglory*, saith Cyril of Jerusalem, *but to teach the truth to his disciples*, when Peter should make known what had been revealed unto him. Christ ever seeketh to be better known, not for His own advantage but for ours. Let me know Thee, Lord. (2) S. Thomas commenteth thus : *Here is instruction that we should care to know what is said of us : that if it be evil we may correct what is amiss ; and if good, we may retain it. Have regard to thy name* (Ecclesiasticus xli. 12) for this purpose but no other. *And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist : some Elias. . . .* Here is good report : but if thou canst not avoid being ill spoken of, take heed that thou give no occasion for it.

2. *But whom say ye that I am?* Matthew xvi. 15.

He looketh for somewhat greater from them who have known Him more closely. *Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* And whom sayest thou that Christ

is? Thou art His minister: thou shouldest have something more than others to say of Him. He is God, thou sayest? Where then is the honour thou owest Him? Why is thy service so lukewarm? Why lovest thou creatures more than Him?

3. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father.* Matthew xvi. 17.

Thou seest then that flesh and blood and worldly knowledge reveal not the things of God, *inasmuch as the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit* (1 Corinthians ii. 14). Turn then thine ears from the teachings of this world, and hear God speak.

WEDNESDAY

CHRIST PREDICTETH HIS OWN DEATH, AND REBUKETH
PETER WHO WITHSTANDETH HIM.

1. *He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders . . . and be killed.* Mark viii. 31.

After the confession of His Divinity straightway He predicteth His death. Wherefore? (1) Because it sufficeth not to believe in Christ as *Son of . . . God*; we must believe also that for us He suffered. (2) That when His hour came the disciples might not be offended, but knowing His Godhead might be assured that He died of His own will, and not from lack of power to save Himself. Print deep in thy heart this mystery of love. (3) To teach us to counter men's praise by humiliation.

2. *Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.* Matthew xvi. 22.

Have we here rash audacity on Peter's part? or an

excess of love? Christ saith *he must*: Peter replieth, *This shall not be unto thee*. The cause is that he considereth not God's decree, nor who it is that speaketh, even He whom he hath lately professed to be the Son of God; but breaketh out as human affection prompteth him. Think ere thou speak: so shalt thou lay a weight upon thy tongue; so shouldst thou not now have reason to repent of what thou hast said.

3. *But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me.* Matthew xvi. 23.

See how Christ counteth it hardship to be restrained from that death which for thy sake He desired. See again how soon He addeth this sharp saying to His words of praise. See how there is no respect of persons with Him. When Peter spake well He called him blessed: as soon as he spake ill He rebuked him. He giveth thee an ensample never to listen even to thy dearest friends if they would turn thee from the right path.]

THURSDAY

WE MUST BEAR THE CROSS AFTER CHRIST.

1. *If any man will come after me.* Matthew xvi. 24.

The Saviour inviteth all: none are compelled, but none excluded. But for this work we need a good and earnest will: frivolity is useless. Let him then that hath such a will first *deny himself*: and that not only by laying aside external things, but by putting to death his own judgment, his evil affections, his desires, and all that belongeth to the old man and to the love of himself. Herein standeth the first beginning of Christian perfection. O good God:

hitherto have I learned nothing at all; everything is yet to learn. When shall I begin? If thou abide in thy frivolity, never.

2. *Take up his cross.* Matthew xvi. 24.

Behold the second rule in this short way of perfection. By the cross thou mayest understand all manner of adversities of mind or body. Take it up in all its size and solidness: in all the breadth of its extent, in all the length of its duration, in all the height of an aspiring mind, in all the depth of true humility. If thou hadst stood by Christ crucified and He had asked thee this, wouldest thou have denied it to Him that died for thee? Then deny it not now, for this is ever His request; ever thine own debt; ever His just claim.

3. *And follow me.* Matthew xvi. 24.

Behold the topmost point of perfection. All is summed up in three words: *Renounce; endure; labour.* Yet many years suffice not for attaining thereunto. Thou must follow: but He thou followest ever goeth on before, heartening thee by His example. Consider the duty of a soldier to his captain, a servant to his master, a son to his father. Thou must follow. How long? There is no limit set: therefore it is unto death. By what road? Thou art not told; therefore it may be rough or smooth, and thou must be as ready for one as for the other. How far hast thou yet gone along this road? What is the next turn that thou must take?

FRIDAY

OF THE LORD'S TRANSFIGURATION.

1. *Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother.* Matthew xvii. 1.

Three only of the twelve He admitteth to this fore-

tasting of glory, nor unto its final enjoyment do all attain. *Bringeth them up into an high mountain*: there is no high knowledge of the things of God to be acquired, nor savour of interior consolation, until we have mounted above all the high things and the pride of this world. He bringeth them *apart* from the tumult of the world, so teaching us that solitude in body as well as in mind serveth for the consolation of the soul. Dost thou lack illumination and spiritual comfort? See whether thou toilest up the mountain: see whether thou withdrawest into thyself.

2. *And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered.* Luke ix. 29.

Fervency, especially in mental prayer, maketh alteration in a man. Seemeth there no enlightenment in thee? Then it is certain that thy meditation beareth not fruit. When thine appointed hour is finished, then likewise is an end of fervour and of thy resolutions. Peradventure thine object is knowledge rather than action. But whereto serveth knowledge? Nay it may turn to be but injury, since thine actions match not with thy knowledge. *His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light* (Matthew xvii. 2). Snow melteth quickly in the sunlight. Trust not then in interior consolation which vanisheth away in a moment. Plant thy feet firmly in the fear of God and in virtuous habit, which dependeth not on sweetness but on reason.

3. *And . . . there appeared unto them Moses and Elias.* Matthew xvii. 3.

These were men of great desire. It is such as they which while on earth be admitted to taste the joys of heaven. *And spake of his decease, that going forth of love, which by His Passion he should accomplish at Jerusalem.* In the midst of joys their talking is of sorrows. The reason thereof is either that the sorrows of Christ are the meritorious cause of our

beatitude; or else that He would teach us that even in sorrow we must keep serenity of countenance, and much more of mind, and that we should rejoice in these very tribulations, *for great is our reward in heaven* (Matthew v. 12).

SATURDAY

THE OFFERED GIFT OF PETER AT THE LORD'S TRANSFIGURATION.

1. *Then . . . Peter . . . said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here.* Matthew xvii. 4.

Peter here standeth for the soul that foundeth all on spiritual savour: so long as he enjoyeth it, he believeth that all is well: but *in time of tribulation* he *falleth away*, and like Peter forsaketh his Master and fleeth. Of such a sort are thy desires. Thou wouldest be virtuous: but wouldest have thy virtue sweet and easy, and not hard and rough. Ponder the unwisdom of such desires. [The very quality of virtue, if thou hast come to know it, lieth in its difficulty.]

2. *Let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.* Matthew xvii. 4.

Where, O Peter? Here in the place of delight, albeit of the spirit, which none the less melteth away like snow in the warmth of the sun? *It is good for us to be here* for a season: so be it; but were it good to pitch thy tabernacle here, and here abide? What sayest thou? Truly *he wist not what to say* (Mark ix. 6). But if Peter is rebuked for desiring to remain in the tasting of heavenly delights, what shall be said to thee who art fast stuck in the carnal enjoyment of thine own comforts?

3. *While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them.* Luke ix. 34.

While Peter is in the act of immoderate rejoicing, and speaketh of there fixing his abode, in a moment the whole of his joy is taken from him. Hence mayest thou estimate the worth of sensible devotion and consolation, which in a moment deserteth thee. If thou buildest thy house of virtue on that foundation, thou shalt fall therewith. If it be indeed so great a boon to enjoy these spiritual delights, how cometh it that when, as needs must be, a little cloud of tribulation cometh, thy soul is overshadowed with gloom and weariness and languor? Thou must find some better place to pitch thy tabernacle.

THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE DISCIPLES HEAR A VOICE FROM HEAVEN, AND ARE
TERRIFIED.

1. *Behold a voice out of the cloud, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* Matthew xvii. 5.

As before upon a mountain Christ had been tempted of the devil, so now upon a mountain the Father beareth witness to His Son; yea, at that very time when His speech was of His Passion. Learn thou hereby that they be proved the sons of God who overcome temptations and suffer many things for His sake. Behold the path that thou must go, if thou wilt be a son of God. *He loveth them that love Him: but greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for Him.*

2. *Hear ye him.* Matthew xvii. 5.

Thus is He set forth as Teacher of the whole world.

The Word of the Father speaketh in our hearts. His speech seemeth hard, but only to men of carnal appetite. But lately Peter had refused to hear : *Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee* (Matthew xvi. 22). Now is he bidden to hear Him speak of His death to Moses and Elias. Learn that thou must hear Jesus when He putteth in thy heart the thought of mortification, or contempt, or poverty, or reproaches, or the bearing of the cross.

3. *And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face.* Matthew xvii. 6.

Thus shewed they with what awe they heard and with what humility they bowed their heart : so learn thou to bow thyself to every word of God. *And were sore afraid:* inasmuch as Christ's speech with Moses and Elias concerning His own Passion was hereby established, arousing human fears. Here hast thou the pattern of the children of this world, nay of thyself, thou that shrinkest from the very name of the cross, and art cast down by every slight adversity. *Yet must we pass through much tribulation.*

MONDAY

CHRIST ROUSETH THEM, AND THEY COME DOWN FROM
THE MOUNTAIN.

1. *And Jesus came . . . and said, Arise, and be not afraid.* Matthew xvii. 7.

God had testified the truth of that discourse concerning the Passion of His Son. While they be still afraid thereat, Jesus bringeth them comfort. Thy human weakness feareth what is hard and repugnant to thy senses, but when Jesus *cometh* by grace, there is nothing to fear. *Arise* with resolute and generous heart. *Though an host of men were laid against thee,*

let this word be thy confidence : *With the help of thy God thou shalt leap over the wall.*

2. *And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.* Matthew xvii. 8.

All had gone : the voice, the cloud, Moses, Elias, the shining of His face, the whiteness of His raiment : Jesus only remained : Him alone they beheld. This was to teach thee to look unto Jesus only in time of comfort or of adversity. Whatever may fall out unto thee in the created world, though it be some great thing and spiritual, consider Jesus only, not thine own advantage. O Jesu, when will that happiness be mine, to seek, to find, to gaze on Thee alone?

3. *And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man.* Matthew xvii. 9.

He would not have them glory at the grace He had bestowed. It is best to guard with humble silence the grace thou hast received from God. Most shameful is it to boast of what is not thine own. *By the grace of God I am what I am* (1 Corinthians xv. 10). Rather do thou humbly take care that *his grace which was bestowed upon thee be not in vain* (1 Corinthians xv. 10).

TUESDAY

A LUNATICK BOY IS BROUGHT UNTO CHRIST.

1. *Lord, have mercy on my son : for he is a lunatick.* Matthew xvii. 15.

In this lunatick see the case of the man who cannot restrain his passions. *For oftentimes he falleth into the fire* (Mark ix. 22) of the love of self, of anger, of concupiscence. *And oft into the water* of shameful

desires. *And . . . he . . . teareth him*, dashing him to the ground, so that he grovelleth among the things of this world, and aspireth not after the things of heaven. *And he foameth, and gnasheth* with words like unto his desires. *And pineth away* with no savour of true devotion. Art thou deeply infected with such a malady? then strive the more carefully to uproot the cause.

2. *Then Jesus answered.* Matthew xvii. 17.

Sternly rebuking him he saith, *O faithless generation* (Mark ix. 19), which after so many signs yet believeth not Jesus to be God: *And perverse*, because when he saith *I brought him to thy disciples and they could not cure him*, he seemeth to assign this to some fault of theirs. *How long shall I be with you* who are not with Me but against Me? Consider if Jesus might not thus have just cause for indignation against thee, when He hath given thee so much, and yet thou art against Him? *Bring him unto me.* See with what benignity He mitigateth the sternness of the rebuke: that thou mayest learn when thou hast found fault not to send away the offender without consolation.

3. *And they brought him.* Mark ix. 20.

The sinner must be brought unto God by the motions of grace: he cannot come in his own strength. *And . . . straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground and wallowed:* for the nearer the worldly man draweth unto Christ, until he be united with Him, the greater is the violence of his passions. *And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him?* This He asked to abate the father's astonishment at the boy's anguish: for indeed the longer thou indulgest thy passions the greater is the fury of their strength.

WEDNESDAY

THE LUNATICK BOY IS HEALED.

1. *Jesus said unto the suppliant father, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. Mark ix. 23.*

Here is faith's great charter : but to thee a notable censure, when thou professest to believe yet pleadest so many impossibilities. It were nearer the truth to confess thy lack of desire. *And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe,* with faith as yet imperfect ; *help thou mine unbelief,* perfecting my faith. Such a beginning will surely struggle through unto perfection. See the contrast with thyself, ever beginning, seldom perfecting, content to have begun.

2. *Jesus . . . rebuked the . . . spirit . . . I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. Mark ix. 25.*

Such is the intention of God that when once his grace hath driven out thy sin it shall never return. Nor did that foul spirit return into the boy. But thou of thine own will invitest again the devil that hath been cast out, though thou art not ignorant that he will torment thee and cast thee again into the fire and into the water. *And rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead.* For the total casting out of thine evil passions thou must likewise be rent and afflicted, and by constant mortification be as one dead, untouched alike by sensual joy or by the world's contempt.

3. *Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief. Matthew xvii. 19, 20.*

Thou complainest that thou canst not cast out this

or that evil passion. Wouldest thou know the cause? It is thine unbelief. Thou believest not that thou canst *do all things through Him who strengtheneth thee*. Thou believest not that thou must be brought into judgment, and sternly punished for this or that surrender to thy passions.

THURSDAY

CHRIST PAYETH TRIBUTE.

1. *They that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? He saith, Yes.* Matthew xvii. 24, 25.

These collectors demand of Christ a debt He oweth not. Thou blamest them; but thine own behaviour is worse than theirs. Is the grace that washeth away thy sins a debt? If it be so, it is no more grace: yet every time that thou committest sin, be it never so slight, hoping for forgiveness, thou demandest payment of the price of that forgiveness. Hardly canst thou sin without implying such a claim. If thou didst suppose that there would be no forgiveness, thou wouldest not sin. Here is impiety indeed.

2. *Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.* Matthew xvii. 25, 26.

Free likewise are the households of the kings of this world. Much more then I, the Son of God, and My household. He claimeth to be free, yet He exempteth not Himself. Wretched indeed were our estate if Christ did nought but what He were bound to do!

Would that thou mightest reach even unto the level of thy bounden duty! And what is there which is good which thou art not bound to do if thou canst, if not by the law of justice, then for the sake of thy vocation, or thy thankful heart?

3. *Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.* Matthew xvii. 27.

(1) Christ will not offend them: though well might He say, as thou dost sometimes, It is their own fault: I gave none occasion. Cause not offence if thou canst avoid it. (2) Christ in His poverty hath not one piece of money of His own. (3) The fish and the brutes shew themselves more obedient than thou.

FRIDAY

THE COMMENDATION OF HUMILITY.

1. *The disciples came unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?* Matthew xviii. 1.

How came this strife about? The greater favours shewn to Peter aroused in the rest both envy and ambition. Here be miserable sinners disputing of a kingdom. None is so low that he hath no thought of advancement. There is no man unto whom there hath not passed his share of Adam's first offence. Meritest thou not this rebuke? If thou art not greater than another, thou wouldest seem to be. Yet, what art thou? Wherefore reckonest thou thyself so high? What be thy merits? and are they not outweighed by

thy faults? What is thy claim? How wilt thou make it good? Who is it that thou wouldest have below thee? Willest thou his degradation? or wouldest thou wrongfully exalt thyself?

2. *Jesus called a little child unto him, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye . . . become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Matthew xviii. 2, 3.

Humility is no optional virtue : if thou wouldest reach heaven thou must have it. Christ's manner of speech maketh that plain. For where there is not humility, there must ever be some base affection. And dost thou think that such an one can pass the gate of heaven into which nothing entereth that defileth? If the beauty of humility persuade thee not, nor Christ's ensample, then be persuaded by necessity.

3. *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* Matthew xviii. 4.

Tell me, if thou seekest certainty in this matter of greatness, whose judgment wilt thou prefer? thine own, or Christ's? The verdict of infinite wisdom surpasseth that of thine own foolishness. Here in plain words that verdict lieth before thee. What hast thou to place against it but the judgment of men that consent not thereunto? By whose judgment then shalt thou be saved, or damned? By the judgment of men, or the judgment of God? Thou believest that John is the greatest among them that are born of women, because Christ said it. It is the Same that said, *He that is least among you all, the same shall be great* (Luke ix. 48).

SATURDAY

OF BROTHERLY REBUKE.

1. *If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.* Matthew xviii. 15.

This concerneth both subject and superior: the one that he may love correction, for otherwise he meriteth a yet more severe rebuke; the other that in due time and place he neglect not to reprove. Thou hatest not the physician when he woundeth that he may heal. He that rebuketh doth the like, if he act from a good motive and from zeal. Why art thou angry at correction, or murmurest, or resistest thy superior to his face? Knowest thou not that God *will require thy blood at his hand*? And thou, Superior, art a physician. Cruel art thou, if thou neglect to wound: thou thyself shalt be lost along with him whom thou hast neglected to gain. *Then shall thy life be for his life* (1 Kings xx. 39).

2. *Tell him his fault between thee and him alone.* Matthew xviii. 15.

Here have we the manner of telling him his fault, that it be in secret. So then, thou brother, or even thou Superior, thou sinnest if when thou mayest convince one of his fault before few witnesses thou choosest to do it before many, yea though thou do the same of charity: for it is charity likewise that for the offender's good name demandeth secrecy, unless the fault was public. Still more thou sinnest if in anger thou privately charge thy brother with his faults, or publicly cast them up against him. Wouldest thou thyself be reproved after this sort? If not, act not so towards thy brother.

3. *If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.* Matthew xviii. 15.

Friendly rebuke humbly accepted is gain to both alike. Thou who rebukest gainest thy brother, gainest all those from whom thou removest a stumbling block, deliverest thy soul. Thou who so hearest rebuke, gainest thine own self, gainest the love of him that correcteth, gainest God Himself. Gain is a motive to us all : thou canst seek no greater gains than these.

THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE PARABLE OF THE SERVANT TO WHOM HIS LORD
FORGAVE ALL HIS DEBT.

1. *Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.* Matthew xviii. 23.

Thou art a servant : thou owest much through sin. Thou must give account to God, the most just Judge, who knoweth all. How shalt thou stand before thy Judge? *One was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents.* Thou art that man. There is no debt so great as the debt of sin. How great a mass thereof hast thou heaped up! *But forasmuch as he had not to pay.* And what hast thou wherewith to make satisfaction? What is there here that is free from cause of fear? or that can give thee hope? *His lord commanded him to be sold.* For by sin thou forfeitest liberty and art made the servant of sin. O bitter servitude!

2. *The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Have patience with me.* Matthew xviii. 26.

How often, Lord, hast thou had patience with one that offered but a careless prayer! I owe it to thine infinite patience that I suffer not the final penalty.

It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed. The angels were cast down in the moment that they sinned: in what way do I deserve a lesser punishment? *And I will pay thee all.* Yea, I will pay all from the treasure of Thy Blood which Thou hast given me, which I so shamefully have trampled under foot. Ah, Thy goodness and Thy love! Ah, mine ingratitude!

3. *Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.* Matthew xviii. 27.

How easily may the wrath of God be asswaged! How bountiful is His generosity, which giveth more than was asked or could be hoped for! How well might that servant be astonished at the readiness of His loving-kindness! Not once alone hast thou had knowledge of the same. Not only hath He loosed thee from the servitude of sin, but hath made thee his son by adoption and heir unto His kingdom. Hast thou earned all this? Will thou ever be able to earn it? And in the time to come wilt thou dare offend His gracious clemency?

MONDAY

THE INGRATITUDE AND CRUELTY OF THAT SERVANT.

1. *But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but . . . cast him into prison.* Matthew xviii. 28—30.

Vast debts hath God forgiven thee: thou wilt not

pardon thy neighbour one little word. How small that offence if thou compare it with thine own! *When his fellowservants saw.* The less thou observest thine own shortcomings the clearer they are to others. *They . . . told unto their lord all that was done.* They did well. *They told unto their lord,* whose office it was to correct the offender, not unto those who had no concern therewith; they told what they had *seen*, not what they wished to prove; *that was done*, not that they suspected.

2. *Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant? Matthew xviii. 32, 33.*

Thou wilt have men bear with thee: thou wilt bear nothing from them. Thou wilt have all men serve thine ease; thou wilt not lift a finger for them. What could be more unworthy? Thou wilt have one law for thyself, another for the rest of men. Now if thou art no imitator of God in rendering good to others, God will be like thee in rendering thee the evil that thou doest unto others. *I will judge . . . every one according to his ways (Ezekiel xviii. 30).*

3. *And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. Matthew xviii. 34.*

Think not that forgiven sins come back to life: but the greater the blessing of forgiveness the greater also is the sin of ingratitude thereafter. Thy heavy debts have been forgiven: thou refusest to forgive these trifles; for thine ingratitude thou shalt be delivered to the tormentors. *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses,* retaining no bitterness of mind. All thine iniquities God remembereth no more, as soon as He proclaimeth

that He hath forgiven them. Dost thou in like manner forget these little offences? Art thou none otherwise disposed to the offender than thou wast before?

TUESDAY

CHRIST, INVITED TO JERUSALEM FOR THE FEAST OF
TABERNACLES, REFUSETH TO GO.

1. *His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judæa, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.* John vii. 3.

They invite Him with fair words, that His disciples may see His works: but withal their desire is that Christ should win fame by His miracles, and so some honour should pass unto themselves His kinsmen. Hidden ambition was cloked by pretended zeal for the glory of Christ. What seek I in the works that I do? The glory of Jesus? Would that my works might so be found! too often my end is truly but mine own advantage.

2. *There is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly.* John vii. 4.

They would persuade Him by using argument, as though they should say, Thou wouldest be owned as Messias: such is thine end in doing miracles. Do them then openly, in the city, which is the world in miniature. *Shew thyself to the world.* They supposed that Christ was eager for vainglory, being so themselves (as saith S. Cyril). Herein standeth a great and frequent error, to measure thy neighbour's affections by thine own. Nay, but if thou look well thou shalt find within thyself that very thing where-with thou chargest him. What manner of man

thinkest thou thy neighbour to be? See if thou be not even such thyself.

3. *Then Jesus said unto them.* John vii. 6.

He refused to go unto Jerusalem, and for this cause: *My time is not yet come*; for He knew well that they sought Him to put Him to death, and it was not yet the Father's will that He should suffer it. Even so He regulated all things by the Father's will. Ah, if thou wouldest ever look unto that same will! And this is the cause why the world hateth Him: *Because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil.* Evil men hate Him because He consenteth not unto their works. But it is better that thou shouldest be hated than loved by these. Thus thou mayest retain thine integrity, which thou couldest scarce do otherwise. Therefore abandon not virtue because men hate thee for it.

WEDNESDAY

CHRIST INTENDING TO GO UP TO JERUSALEM IS NOT
RECEIVED BY THE SAMARITANS.

1. *He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.* Luke ix. 51.

And John addeth, *not openly, but as it were in secret* (vii. 10). This manner of speech signifieth His resolve to go to the place where He knew that men sought Him to put Him to death, and where later in that year He would be nailed to the cross. What would be thy mind if thou wert appointed to a place wherein thou knewest that thou shouldest die that year? But that thou knowest not; what is far more certain is that neither place nor duty will do thee injury. Yet thou refusest to go to such a place, or makest resistance. Do thou in such times of difficulty take courage to set thy face steadfastly.

2. *And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans. . . . And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.* Luke ix. 52, 53.

Once before for the word of a woman they welcomed Christ, and acclaimed Him as Messias: now they receive Him not. Of this sort is the love of them that love for their own advantage. The Samaritans had a quarrel with the Jews: therefore because Christ sheweth that He is going to Jerusalem He is refused. The world's maxim is to hold him suspect who is friendly with mine enemy. When thus we follow the world we shut Christ out. Shame on us, how oft it is so! We be afraid of virtue because in benefiting the soul it afflicteth the body. Why set we not our face steadfastly herein?

3. *And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said . . . Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?* Luke ix. 54.

With seeming zeal was mingled the evil passion of revenge. Therefore Christ blameth them: *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.* Ye think that ye are filled with zeal for My honour: but in truth it is nothing but the passion of anger. Take heed lest vices likewise creep into thy heart disguised as virtues. *The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.* The reason why He seemeth not to heed the injury thou mayest find in the end He sought after. Ah, Jesu, how oft must I have perished hadst Thou not come to save! But do thou, who ever regardest Thine end, teach me to consider mine in every act, and so to save my soul.

THURSDAY

TEN LEPERS ARE CLEANSED.

1. *There met him ten men that were lepers.* Luke xvii. 12.

Think on the leprosy of imperfections in thyself. *Which stood afar off, knowing their uncleanness : and they lifted up their voices, with ardent affection, and said, with full resignation, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.* Such are the conditions of right converse with God : humility, ardour and resignation.

2. *And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go, shew yourselves unto the priests.* Luke xvii. 14.

To them by the law it appertained to judge concerning leprosy. In the exercise of charity towards the afflicted He will not violate the law. So charity, if it be well-ordered, demandeth that in performance of its duties thou break not God's commands, nor neglect due obedience. *And it came to pass, that, as they went, in a blind obedience, not judging this way or that of His command, they were cleansed.* Such is the fruit of such obedience. Do what is commanded thee, and thou shalt receive a benefit unlooked for.

3. *And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks : and he was a Samaritan.* Luke xvii. 15, 16.

All we receive graces : how few say a grace for them ! In which number art thou ? Art thou not surpassed herein by Samaritans who are less bound to thankfulness ? Might not God rightly reproach thee saying, *There are not found that returned to give glory to God ?* If thou wouldest have an open fount of graces, be not ungrateful. And the best gratitude is the good use of the blessing given.

FRIDAY

CHRIST TEACHETH OPENLY IN THE TEMPLE.

1. *Then went he . . . up unto the feast. . . . Then the Jews sought him to kill him, and said, Where is he?* John vii. 10, 11.

They deign not to utter His name : to such contempt did Jesus come down for thy sake. *And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him.* Thus received He evil for good : and do thou expect nought else from the world when thou hast done thy best. *Some, but how few ! said, He is a good man : others, how many ! said . . . He deceiveth the people.* If thou wouldest traverse this world by straight paths thou must endure crooked judgments. *Howbeit no man of them that were well affected, spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.* How heavy doth the fear of men and respect of their persons weigh with thee ! Would that the thought of God outweighed it !

2. *Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.* John vii. 14.

Giving way to the madness of the Jews which was then at its height, He avoided the first days of the feast. None the less, when the madness subsided He went up. Learn that when thy neighbour is disturbed in mind thou mayest give way to him, doing nothing in rashness, yet leaving nought undone through fear. *And the Jews marvelled at His doctrine : yet fruitlessly.* Thou art like them. Thou hearest and readest many things, and thy judgment approveth them, but without intent to put them into practice : thus thou avoidest the execution of the things which with thy mind thou favourest. The time will come when thou shalt be judged according to the measure of thy knowledge.

3. *Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?* John vii. 19.

A rebuke of severity! Fear thou lest thou mayest hear Jesus say the like words to thee. Did not I give thee the law, and yet thou keepest not the law? *The people answered. . . . Thou hast a devil.* To whom speak they? To the Son of God. Art thou not stricken with horror? Yet the Son of God Himself keepeth silence, and uttereth not that truth wherewith He might have answered to their blasphemies. Now bethink thee how thou wouldest repay injury with injuries; and let the worm learn to suffer what God hath endured.

SATURDAY

OFFICERS ARE SENT TO TAKE JESUS.

1. *The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him (as that He was Messias); and . . . sent officers to take him.* John vii. 32.

The multitudes in their simplicity, believe in Jesus and love Him: the Pharisees in their pride are filled with bitterness because they think to lose their authority. One passion ever fanneth the flame of another. *Then said Jesus unto them, unto the officers, Yet a little while am I with you. . . . Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me.* Woe is me: may I never hear from Him, *I go my way, nor yet, Ye shall not find me!* O Jesus, I will seek Thee till I find: then will I hold Thee fast.

2. *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.* John vii. 37.

Take His words unto the people and apply them to thyself. Thou thirstest for thy salvation, since there

is no man that desireth not this. But likewise thou thirstest for the muddy waters of earthly consolations. But how will they make thee happy? Thirst after that which may well be thirsted after, even God and thine own salvation. Hearken to the invitation, *Come and drink* unto satiety, which thou shalt never find except in God. What hast thou thirsted after hitherto; and art thou satisfied, wretched man?

3. *Some of them would have taken him.* John vii. 44.

He knew well wherefore they were come, yet without fear He continueth His discourse. Thereby their hearts were changed. *But no man laid hands on him.* Even so dangers ever yield to constancy. What thou hast begun with virtuous intent surcease not through fear. Doth danger approach? constancy will destroy its power.

THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE OFFICERS RETURN PRAISING CHRIST.

1. *Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?* John vii. 45.

How watchful are the Pharisees over the execution of their wicked command! How straitly they enquire why it hath not been carried out! If thou wouldest but shew the like vigilance over thy plans for a holier life, and the like indignation at thyself if they be not put into action! To propose and not perform is to hunger and not eat. To will is not enough: there must be action also.

2. *The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.* John vii. 46.

Thus saith Theophylact. *They heeded not the*

Pharisees' wrath, nor, though sent as servants with a mission to perform, did they for that reason say what would please their rulers. They confess themselves taken captive by the words of Him whom they were to have brought as a prisoner. They speak in praise of Him before them that would have Him put down. Such freedom in the cause of God deserveth all praise. Use it first against thyself : but thou mayest well use it likewise against other men, especially when thy duty is concerned. Speak not to please, but to benefit.

3. *Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?* John vii. 47.

When the officers said, Never man so spake, they should have asked what he had said, so saith Euthymius : but instead they turn to wrathful rebuke. Anger and envy had made them blind. When passion is ruler, reason is cast down from her throne. Now they add an argument from authority : Have any of the rulers . . . believed on him? as though they would say, Not one, but only this people. Even so, God hideth Divine mysteries from the wise and revealeth them unto babes and to the humble. If thou wouldest taste the things of God, be humble. They are accursed, they say, even they that believe. Let such curses fall on me from proud men : but not from the humble Jesus !

MONDAY

A WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY IS LET GO.

1. *The scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery . . . and . . . they say unto him . . . Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned : but what sayest thou? This they*

said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. John viii. 3—6.

Knowing His gentleness they thought that He would give a decision contrary to the law. *But Jesus stooped down:* He who knoweth all things declineth to be a judge; thou who knowest nothing art so ready to pass judgment. *And with his finger wrote on the ground* to signify His readiness to forgive. As wind and water obliterate what is written in the dust, so tears and sighs blot out our sins, written on the earth.

2. *So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.* John viii. 7.

Here is a double temptation; and Christ sheweth Himself pitiful, yet an observer of the law, neither condemning the sinner nor condoning her sin. He came to seek that which was lost, not to lose that which He had found. He putteth this bridle upon all judgment, and on the tongue that is prone to judge, that thou consider whether thou be without sin. Thou must either be faultless and so apt for judgment: or if thou be not so, thou must not judge.

3. *And they which heard this . . . went out one by one.* John viii. 9.

Because, saith Bede, each began to discern within himself what he knew to be more worthy of condemnation. If thou look within, thou shalt see thine own misdeeds with horror, and be ready to hide up other men's. *And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst, ashamed and contrite, but filled with hopes of pardon. When Jesus had lifted up himself to regard her with His eyes of mercy, he said unto her, Woman . . . hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus*

said unto her, *Neither do I condemn thee.* Jesus the Advocate rebuffed her adversaries : Jesus the merciful Judge pardoned her offence. What mayest thou not hope for from Clemency Itself, if only thou heed His admonition, *Sin no more?*

TUESDAY

CHRIST TEACHING IN THE TEMPLE.

1. *I am the light of the world.* John viii. 12.

Men's minds have light to discern between good and evil, between truth and falsehood, between virtues and vices. Without this light *thou shalt grope at noonday . . . and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways* (Deuteronomy xxviii. 29). Would that this light would rise on me and shew me myself. *He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness.* So contrariwise he that followeth Thee not walketh in darkness. Now know I whence cometh the darkness of my mind towards the things of God : it is because I have not followed Thee, my Light ; because I have lived after a manner which Thou condemnest both by word and by example ; when I knew Thee as God, I glorified Thee not as God.

2. *Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father?* Jesus answered, *Ye neither know me, nor my Father.* John viii. 19.

Had He not said (John vii. 28) *Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am?* But their knowledge was of the intellect only, not a knowledge which concerned itself with moral action : for their acts were far other than those He taught by word and by example. Can He not bring against thee this same accusation : Thou neither knowest Me nor My Father? If thou deniest, I will convince thee. Christ condemned the way of laxity : thou followest it. Is

this to know God? *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his teaching and followeth not his example is a liar* (1 John ii. 4).

3. *Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins.* John viii. 21.

This is no absolute decree, for there is a condition attached: *If ye believe not.* Yet without condition He declareth that believers shall be few. For their sin was such that they could hardly be converted. What then was this sin? *Ye are from beneath . . . ye are of this world,* savouring and affecting the things of earth. Doth not this dreadful word strike upon thy heart, and move thee to leave the paths of the world, to go not after these low and earthly objects, to rise to the eternal and divine?

WEDNESDAY

AS CHRIST TEACHETH, MANY BELIEVE.

1. *As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.* John viii. 30, 31.

The mark of a good disciple is the perfect possession of the Master's teaching. But for such perfect knowledge thou must know that thou knowest. Knowest thou that thou knowest the teachings of Christ? How then cometh it to pass that thou harbourst these base affections? that thou followest the errors of this world clean contrary to the teachings of thy Master? Nay, as yet thou canst not claim to know that thou knowest. If thou wouldest prove thyself a true disciple, thou must shew thy works.

2. *They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man. . . . Jesus answered them . . . Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.* John viii. 33, 34.

They boast of not having been in bondage to man, but care nothing for their bondage to sin. The sweeter we find this servitude, the more rigorous is it in truth. No one is vanquished by his lust without his will and free consent: yet mark, *For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage* (2 Peter ii. 19). Sweet is this servitude, because we love it: yet rigorous, inasmuch the less thou dealest death unto thy lusts the more deadly is their work in thee. *I have broken thy yoke, and thou saidst unto thy lusts with generous resolve, I will not transgress* (Jeremiah ii. 20).

3. *If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.* John viii. 39.

He admonisheth them to prove their origin by their works. With God sonship is proved by works and not by words. Not all are of Christ who call themselves Christians. Wouldest thou prove thyself the child of God? do the works which God incarnate did. Thy distance from such attainment is the distance that lieth between words and deeds.

THURSDAY

THE JEWS WOULD STONE CHRIST.

1. *Which of you convinceth me of sin?* John viii. 46.

Here be the words of One whose conscience begetteth confidence: they are no words for thee. Think not that thy defence is good enough when thou canst say to one that accuseth thee, *It is not*

true : no one can prove it against me. For there is One that will prove it, and set Himself against thee. *If in my teaching I say the truth, why do ye not believe me, when I am without guile and without sin?* Jesus never deceiveth thee, yet by thy works thou rejectest His teaching. *He that is of God heareth God's words.* That is the mark of the children of God, a mark thou bearest not. *Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.* Consider in what manner thou attendest to the doctrine of Christ which goeth against the teaching of the world, and to God's holy inspirations : then shalt thou know if thou be of God.

2. *Then answered the Jews. . . . Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?* John viii. 48.

A horrible calumny : the Son of God possessed with a devil ! He answereth right gently : *I have not a devil.* How wouldest thou endure a like accusation ? How wouldest thou hurl calumnies to outdo thine accuser ! *I honour my Father,* which no devil doeth : *and ye do dishonour me* with calumny, who yet am God. Such is the act of a devil. See then what spirit ye are of. *I seek not mine own glory* by vindicating Mine honour as the world counteth glory. But thou, a worm, how much thought thou takest for thy glory ! Harken and fear : *There is one that seeketh and judgeth,* who will take thy glory from thee to thine own confusion and give it unto Him to whom all honour and glory is rightly due.

3. *Then said the Jews. . . . Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?* John viii. 57.

So Christ had said but now. *Jesus said . . . Before Abraham was, I am,* since from everlasting I am God. *Then took they up stones to cast at him. Whither should such hard hearts betake themselves in haste,*

but to the stones (so saith S. Austin). Such be the acts of hard hearts, obstinately attached to their own affections. So likewise hard words against thy neighbour be stones which thou wouldest cast at God in him. *But Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.* Even so, if thou shew thyself hard towards thy neighbour, thou puttest God to flight. He *went out* to give place unto their wrath: that thou too mayest learn not to fan the flame.

FRIDAY

ONE IS HEALED THAT WAS BLIND FROM HIS BIRTH.

1. *Jesus . . . saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents?* John ix. 1, 2.

In this question, saith Rupert, they fling out such a rash judgment as thou likewise art prone to make too lightly. But, for the most part, like them, thou errest. *Neither did this man sin, nor his parents.* For bodily ills are not always a punishment for sin: *but that the works of God should be made manifest.* But what is the cause of my blindness? Would that it were for the manifestation of *the works of God* whose providence had so disposed: but alas it is the fire of concupiscence that hath descended, *and I see not the sun* (Psalm lviii. 7).

2. *He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man.* John ix. 6.

Clay upon the eyes sufficeth to make one blind that seeth: how doth God in this wise make the blind to see? Sometimes He worketh strangely through means that seem opposed unto His end. He strengtheneth through temptation, enlighteneth through dryness,

exalteth through humiliation. Deny thine own judgment then, and commit thyself to His providence. He will convert all seeming hindrances into good.

3. *And said unto him, Go, Wash in the pool of Siloam.* John ix. 7.

He might have answered : But it is Thou, not the waters which have this power : Thou needest them not. Or, If there be need of water, will not that serve which is nearby ? Or, I shall find derision if I go my way besmeared with clay. *But, saith S. Chrysostom, he made no such reply. All that he cared for was to obey in all things. See now the fruit of blind obedience. He went his way . . . washed . . . and came seeing.* There is ever comfort for him that will carry out God's will.

SATURDAY

THE MAN WHOSE SIGHT WAS RESTORED DEFENDETH
THE VERITY OF THE MIRACLE BEFORE THE PHARISEES.

1. *The neighbours . . . said, Is not this he that sat and begged ?* John ix. 8.

Some averred, and some denied. *But he said, I am he.* They asked, *How were thine eyes opened ?* He said, *Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash. And I went and washed, and I received sight.* To what power assigneth he the benefit ? Not to the clay, not to the waters, not to his own faith ; but to Him from whom is *every good gift*. In Him alone is the well spring of all good things. If thou receivest them from men, they are but instruments. To Him thou owest thy thanks.

2. *They brought him to the Pharisees.* John ix. 13.

They ask him again *how he had received his sight. They say unto the blind man . . . What sayest thou of him?* They call the parents, and ask, *Is this your son, who ye say was born blind?* . . . Wherefore this long examination? In the counsel of God, that knowledge of the miracle might bring to pass the conversion of a greater number : in the intention of men that Christ's good repute should vanish into the dust, or that they might have opportunity to calumniate Him because *he keepeth not the sabbath day.* How ill an envious man endureth to hear another's praise ! How art thou disposed towards thy neighbour's honour ?

3. *Then again called they the man.* John ix. 24.

Under the cloke of piety they urge him to *give God the praise.* By the use of their authority they would have him contradict the truth : *We know that this man is a sinner.* Hearken to the freedom wherewith he undertaketh His defence. *We know that God heareth not sinners. . . . If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.* As yet he knew Him not for God ; yet with such zeal he defendeth His honour. Thou who by faith knowest His Godhead, what doest thou ? He hath no fear of their authority. But thou, how readily for respect of persons dost thou leave off from good, and let Him suffer wrong !

THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE MAN WHOSE SIGHT WAS RESTORED IS CAST OUT OF
THE SYNAGOGUE AND RECEIVED BY CHRIST.

1. *And they cast him out.* John ix. 34.

He was cast out for defending Christ. Even so, he that standeth on the side of virtue and of Christ is

not received by the ill disposed or is not welcome to them ; inasmuch as he is not for their turn nor consenteth to their words and light behaviour. Wouldest thou stand for the teaching of Christ, for thy rule of life, for virtue? Then thou must make thyself ready for such rebuffs. The ill-affected will avoid thy company. What of it? God will take thee to Himself.

2. *When Jesus had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him. John ix. 35—38.*

So soon as ever he is touched with ignominy for Christ's sake, saith S. Cyril of Alexandria, straightway Christ manifesteth himself unto him, and granteth him interior illumination. Be this thy consolation if thou art hated for virtue's sake.

3. *And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not, the simple, the rude, the despised, may see, being illuminated by My grace ; and that they which see, with all the swollen pride of their wisdom, may see not the things of heaven, which God hath hidden from the wise, and revealeth unto babes (John ix. 39). So then Christ will discern if thou knowest, and what thou knowest. Meanwhile in this life art thou ambitious to see the things of God? Then thou must neither look upon earthly things, nor value them.*

MONDAY

CHRIST IS THE DOOR.

1. *I am the door of the sheep. John x. 7.*

A body bigger than the door may not enter by the

door : if it is to pass that way the superfluous parts must be cut off. A lowly door admitteth not a proudly carried head. Now the door by which thou mayest enter into life is the Word reduced to lowliness. How shalt thou enter thereby who *walkest among great things and among marvellous things beyond thee?* Fashion thyself according to the measure of the lowly door, and lift not up thy heart.

2. *By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.* John x. 9.

There is no entry to salvation more sure than through the humility of Christ Jesus. In this life *he humbled himself. . . . Wherefore God . . . hath highly exalted him.* Shall go in by pondering the hidden things of the Divine being which God revealeth not but unto babes : *and out* by imitating His life, which was all humble and despised ; *and find pasture*, when as saith S. Gregory, *he inly feedeth and fatteneth the mind by devout prayers, and satiateth himself outwardly with works of piety.*

3. *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* John x. 10.

Wherefore was the Son of God made man? Wherefore made He Himself of no reputation? *That* thou mightest *have life* in thy soul. The humiliation of Christ was the price of thy soul. But His paying of the price that thou mayest live is not enough : He came that thou mightest *have life more abundantly.* He would have thee do thy part, and (according to the interpretation of S. Bonaventure) grow continually. But unless the humility of Christ become thine own humility, there is no growth. Thinkest thou that eternity is not worth this brief humiliation?

TUESDAY

CHRIST THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

1. *I am the good shepherd.* John x. 14.

Christ's sheep hath three enemies : the wolf, which is the ravening devil ; the hireling, which is the deceitful world ; the thief, which is the secret love of self. How fiercely they attack thee ! but thou hast Jesus the good Shepherd, who guardeth thee. He suffereth thine enemies to harrass thee, but only that thou mayest have occasion to overcome them, and He to award thy crown. He fighteth for thee and with thee. If thou art overcome it is not through the valour of the conqueror, but through thine own fault. But the *good Shepherd* demandeth a good sheep. Art thou such ? meek, patient, gentle ?

2. *And know my sheep. . . . And I lay down my life for the sheep.* John x. 14.

Here be two marks of the good Shepherd. (1) Great would be the consolation of thy soul in any difficulty, if with sincere faith thou saidst, My Shepherd knoweth me. He knoweth me who knoweth all things : He dealeth according to His knowledge, with such wisdom and prudence as my case demandeth. Wherefore I now resign myself unto His providence. (2) Consider who it is that hath laid down His life for thee : take heed of His love ; and if thou be not a stone, render it again.

3. *My sheep hear my voice . . . and they follow me.* John x. 27.

Likewise there be two marks of Christ's sheep. Dost thou then hear His voice ? even when He calleth thee to rugged ground ? What if He should say, *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves ?* (Matthew x. 16). If thou fearest, if thou wouldest escape, thou art no sheep of Christ. Dost thou

follow Him? What if He lead thee to barren pasture? Dost thou say, *The Lord is my shepherd: therefore can I lack nothing?* (Psalm xxiii. 1). What if He lead thee to the shambles? Dost thou suffer thyself to be led as a sheep to the slaughter? If not, thou shalt never be a sheep of Christ.

WEDNESDAY

AT THE FEAST OF THE DEDICATION THE JEWS WOULD
STONE CHRIST.

1. *Then came the Jews round about him* (John x. 24) *like many oxen and fat bulls and said . . .* (not as seeking the truth but laying a snare, as saith Bede) : *How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.* Behold their perverted minds. When He teacheth them by word, they ask, *What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?* (John ii. 18). When by His works He sheweth them His power, they say, *If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.* When His works proclaim Him, they will have words: when they have His words, works alone will suffice. Yet they give credence neither to these nor those. And is not this my case, when I will follow neither His teaching nor His ensample?

2. *Jesus answered them, The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.* John x. 25.

A man hath no better way of shewing what he is than by his works. *The witness of things, saith S. Chrysostom, is better evidence than the witness of words.* Therefore would Christ be known by His works, and sheweth signs *which none other man can do.* What do thy works say of thee? I fear lest God upbraid thee, saying, *I have not found thy works*

perfect (Revelation iii. 2). *Religion standeth in works and not in words*, saith S. Cyril.

3. *Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.* John x. 31.

This was when they heard His words, *I and my Father are one*. They feign a zeal to punish blasphemy, themselves blaspheming when they bring that charge against very God; but in truth they are impelled by blinding hate and envy. Mark the deceitfulness of passion, which maketh slaves of our very virtues. Even so our acts of humility may be corrupted by pride, our zeal by wrath. See that it impose not so on thee, and purge thine actions from the taint of passion.

THURSDAY

THE SENDING OF THE SEVENTY DISCIPLES.

1. *The Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face.* Luke x. 1.

The Master's eye constraineth the attention of the disciple. In face of Him he will neglect no part of his duty. Thou must ever walk in the presence of God. *Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few.* Thus spake He to teach them that each one must supply the deficiency of many, and to instruct thee that, if thou canst, thou must gladly and willingly accept more burdens than thou now dost bear. *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers.* He cannot away with idlers. Yet idle art thou in some wise if thou refuse to increase thy burden when thou canst. He will have labourers *sent forth*. They may not choose their place of toil, nor arrange nor importune office for themselves. Wait then to be sent forth in the way of obedience,

and essay not to choose thy place. If thou choosest, thou reliest on thyself; if thou art sent, on God. What is thy will?

2. *Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.* Luke x. 3.

Not as unto pleasant pastures. Theophylact thus commenteth: *He predicteth them persecutions, lest they be overmuch distressed when it so falleth out.* How art thou disposed unto missions such as this? Certain thou art of difficulty, but certain likewise of giving much glory unto God. Which hath more weight with thee? In the mean time, prepare for the greater hardships by endurance of the lesser.

3. *He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me.* Luke x. 16.

They that be sent forth by Christ are armed with His authority. They are ambassadors representing the person of their King. Acknowledge this authority in them that be set over thee, and thine obedience will be readier and more cheerful. Thy difficulty in obeying is that thou seest but a man that commandeth thee. If thou couldest see and hear God issuing these same commands, would it not be easier to obey?

FRIDAY

THE SEVENTY RETURN FROM THEIR MISSION.

1. *The seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.* Luke x. 17.

Here is no pride in the casting forth of spirits, inasmuch as they set it down to the name of Jesus and His grace: yet S. Gregory would have us see some taint of vainglory in that they were deemed

meet to perform these works. Even the pious and holy often feel the uprising of complacency in the thought of duty well done for God's glory. Yet as the doing of it is owed to God so likewise is His choice of thee to do it: so that thou must seek to satisfy Him in all things, thyself in none. If the devils of passion are subject unto thee, that is God's work and not thine own.

2. *I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.* Luke x. 18.

He correcteth the vain exultation of the disciples by reminding them of Lucifer: not that their fault was like his, but that He would have them avoid the least shade of vainglory. So, when pride riseth up in thee, or complacency in gifts bestowed, remind thyself of this, *I saw Satan . . . fall*. Then think, From whence: *From heaven*; and what safe standing-ground dost thou expect on earth? And who? The noblest of the angels: and shall pride be tolerated in thee? And how? As lightning: hardly had he admitted the evil thought when punishment fell. There is no sin which God chastiseth so suddenly as pride.

3. *In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.* Luke x. 20.

Graces unmerited, speaking and teaching, a ready mind, a power to influence, and the like, are granted even to the reprobate. Why shouldest thou exult in what may bring thee to eternal loss? The vein of true joyfulness runneth down from heaven where only is our true good. If thou find thy name written in the book of life, thou mayest exult: for then thy habitation is with a good that endureth for ever. What manner of joy seekest thou? Joy eternal? Then see where thou bestowest thy love. Joy ever followeth in the train of love.

SATURDAY

A LAWYER'S QUESTION AND THE ANSWER OF CHRIST.

1. *A certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him. . . . Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?* Luke x. 25.

A right good question for one who would act aright, though it were asked with wavering mind. Would that this were thine own daily care! Yet mark: *What shall I do?* not what shall I think? Never let thy care be for knowledge rather than for action. Eternal life is won by doing, not by sighing in vain desire: works are the path to heaven. He is not worthy of heaven who doth not both desire it and likewise work that he may possess it.

2. *He said . . . What is written in the law?* Luke x. 26.

To answer his question He turneth to the law. If thou wouldest ask likewise of eternal life, thou shalt find what thou must do in the law of God, in the examples of the good, in the consideration of thine estate in this life. Thy desire for life must be equalled by thy desire of the way thereto. If thou walkest in some other way than that shewn to thee by precept and commandment, How shall I say that thou art desirous of heaven? See then that thou observe these diligently. For this is a true saying: *As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them* (Galatians vi. 16).

3. *He answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.* Luke x. 27, 28.

Christ approveth his answer: we must do as the

lawyer said. See then what be the reasons wherefore thou must love God. He is *the Lord: thy: God*. See the mode thereof: *with all the heart, with all the soul*, and so forth. *This do*. This doest thou? Is there nothing else in thy heart to love? Carest thou not for vainglory? or for thyself?

THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE PARABLE OF ONE THAT WENT DOWN TO JERICHO.

1. *A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho*. Luke x. 30.

In this man behold the wretched estate of the sinner. He *goeth down from Jerusalem*, the enjoyment of the things of God, *to Jericho*, the life of transient pleasure. He *falleth among thieves*, even among evil spirits and his own lusts. They *strip him of his raiment* of grace and supernatural gifts. They *wound him*, inflicting on his mind blindness, on his will detestation of the good. They *leave him half dead*, with faith alone unformed by love. Ponder these wounds; peradventure thyself hast suffered them: and if thou art wise go not down from Jerusalem and the handling of the things of God to Jericho and earthly affections. For here is the source of every evil.

2. *And by chance there came down a certain priest that way . . . and likewise a Levite*. Luke x. 31, 32.

They see him half dead: they pass by on the other side. *A Samaritan* passeth that way. In him behold Christ who hath had pity on thee. *He saw thee, he had compassion on thee*, even when thou wert an enemy. He *went to thee by His grace*: He

bound up thy wounds; the wound of thy mind with spiritual illumination, the wound of thy will by infusing the desire for good. He *poured in oil* of pardon *and stinging wine* of contrition and fear; *and set thee on the beast* of grace that should carry thee along; *and brought thee to an inn*, where was a sheepfold; *and took care of thee* with Divine providence. Own then thy misery and God's mercy whereby thou art come unto thy present wholeness.

3. *On the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence.* Luke x. 35.

These pence be love and power. He *gave them to the host*, that is to the pastors of the Church. He commended to them the wounded man. *Take care of him.* Suffer not thy brother, redeemed by Christ, healed of his sins by penitence, to fall back again into the jaws of death: but contrariwise, by prayers and sacraments, by reproof and exhortation, likewise by love and patience, so tend him that Christ when He cometh again may find him fully restored. Without doubt He will take account of the execution of thy trust.

MONDAY

CHRIST IS RECEIVED BY MARTHA.

1. *Jesus entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.* Luke x. 38.

Knowing that Jesus was held in hatred of the Jews and that they sought Him to put Him to death, she yet feareth not to receive Him and shew Him love. Love for Christ should thus be such that no danger can do it injury. Yet how easily art thou made to shrink through fear! Thou art *afraid where no fear was*, or should have been. Thou fearest to lose the

favour of men : why not to lose the grace of God which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell?

2. *And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.* Luke x. 39.

But, as saith S. Austin, the more humble her seat the fuller her meed. Wilt thou receive the teaching of the Lord? Sit thou in quietness of thy spirit : at Jesus' feet in humbleness. For water floweth, as he saith again, into the valley of humility. She heard ; to signify her readiness to obey. She sat and heard, saith S. Bernard, ready to shew obedience to her Teacher, whether this way or that. When we find leisure to contemplate the things of God, we must have equal readiness for the labours of the active life.

3. *But Martha was cumbered about much serving.* Luke x. 40.

To be cumbered is to "have enough to do." He doeth enough who doeth what needeth to be done. We are one body, but many members. One is set over others. He is the eye. He doeth not enough if he doeth what belongeth to the hand : if he must needs meddle with each one's business as if nothing were well done but what he doth himself. Others are tongues ; teachers and preachers : they do not enough if they do what belongeth to the head and claim the functions of superiors. Whatsoever member thou mayest be, in whatsoever office, do thine own part, and thou dost enough.

TUESDAY

MARTHA COMPLAINING OF HER SISTER IS REBUKED BY THE LORD.

1. *Martha came to him and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?* Luke x. 40.

She complaineth of her sister that she serveth not, and of the Lord that He biddeth her not. She is like them that be intent upon the active life and are ever comparing themselves with others who do less for their neighbours because they cannot or may not. Hence come murmurings: Why should not he do this or that? Why is it left to me? To avoid such murmurings bethink thee thus: The Lord careth for me whatever is my occupation. So likewise He careth for that other though he be not thus occupied. Thou must do thy task alone? What of that? The Lord also trod the winepress alone. How art thou better than He?

2. *And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.* Luke x. 41.

Martha serveth the Lord but with so much anxiety and disturbance of mind that she maketh remonstrance against the Lord Himself. That cannot be pleasing to the Lord. The disturbed mind hath no place for consideration. Therefore it poureth itself out, under pretext of confidence, in that which beseemeth not the time, the place, the person, or should be said otherwise. Therefore whatever thou doest, do it without disturbance of the mind. The way thereto is to premeditate thine acts and words.

3. *But one thing is needful.* Luke x. 42.

S. Hierome and S. Gregory understand this to mean that one dish sufficeth for the nourishment of the body, as though the Lord would say that there was no need for the toil of preparing more than this. But Cassian's interpretation is that we need but one dish of food for the soul, and that is contemplation. Now dost thou care more for feeding the body or the soul? Doubtless the soul deserveth the greater care. Therefore the Lord approveth the better part which

Mary chose. See then with what care thou must perform thy spiritual business inasmuch as that is the better part.

WEDNESDAY

CHRIST BEING INVITED BY A PHARISEE REPROVETH HYPOCRISY.

1. *A certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.* Luke xi. 37, 38.

Was Christ in fault in that He washed not His hands before He sat down? Why was He not excused in virtue of the good name He had with all men? Proud self-esteem passed that harsh judgment upon Christ. A good and humble man giveth charitable judgment upon another's actions. What of thyself? Art thou not prone to judge? Makest thou not a mountain of a molehill? Dost thou not suspect evil within when there is none without? And who revealed to thee what is known to God alone?

2. *And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.* Luke xi. 39.

He condemneth not outward cleanliness, so it be sought with moderation: but He would have the greater care for that which is within. Carest thou more for cleanness of thy conscience, or thy bed? of thy soul, or thy raiment? Thou takest heed that thy shoe be not bespattered, but continuest heedless of thy soul.

3. *Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?* Luke xi. 40.

He forestalleth the retort that in the law God had commanded outward cleanness. But God careth not less for inner purity. He refuseth not external acts of virtue, humiliation or silent endurance of injuries: but He will have them come from the inner man; else have they no life; they be dead works. Be not thou like the painter who careth only to simulate reality: let thine action be also *out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned* (1 Timothy i. 5).

THURSDAY

CHRIST REFUSETH TO BE A JUDGE BETWEEN TWO
BROTHERS AT VARIANCE.

1. *And one of the company said to him, Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me.* Luke xii. 13.

This man truly betrayeth his affection for the things of earth in that for their sake he breaketh the law of charity and is at variance with his brother. His business with Jesus should have been of that eternal inheritance which He came to make ready for us, and lo he concerneth himself with an inheritance of this world. What a man loveth he hath in mind even when he hath to do with God. Whence come thy wandering thoughts in prayer? Are they not from this that thy thoughts must follow in the train of thine affections? Be rid of thy base affections, and thou shalt be rid likewise of thy wandering of thought.

2. *Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?* Luke xii. 14.

Christ deigneth not, saith S. Hierome, to be a justice or an arbitrator. But wherefore? Was it not a good work to assign a man his own, or to reconcile brethren? Yea, but He looketh to His proper end. So saith S. Ambrose, He who had come down to earth for a heavenly end refuseth to concern Himself with earthly things. Learn then not to entangle thyself with what concerneth not thy vocation. He that hath entered the service of God must approve himself to Him; for therefore did he dedicate himself. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life (2 Timothy ii. 4). Flatter not thyself with pretexts of prudence or of charity. It is neither prudence nor charity to meddle with what belongeth not to thy vocation.

3. *Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* Luke xii. 15.

How greatly doth the world err! *Happy are the people that are in such a case* (Psalm cxliv. 15). Christ telleth us that neither life nor happiness consist in abundance of such things. Our life is more happy when the heart is free from inordinate affections. Didst thou once relinquish all for freedom's sake? Beware lest having abandoned greater things thou attach thy mind to trifles. Think not an affection to be evil because it loveth and longeth after great things, but because it turneth thy mind away from God. What doth it matter whether thou be drawn aside by great things or small? Nay: if they be small thy madness is the greater.

FRIDAY

OF THE RICH AND COVETOUS MAN.

1. *The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully.* Luke xii. 16.

In this man behold the miseries which riches bring with them. *He thought within himself*, having no friend to confide in : *saying, What shall I do?* How is he troubled in mind ! *Because I have no room.* These be the words of one that is poor : the covetous man hath never enough. *Where to bestow my fruits :* mark his anxiety for a place to bestow what may yet be destroyed by tempest. *This will I do : I will pull down my barns, and build greater :* see the toil of pulling down and building up wherein he is involved. But, worst of all, in none of this was there one thought of goodness, or of thankfulness to God, or of using His gifts to His glory. Happy art thou that God hath saved thee from such evils as these ! Thank Him with all thy heart, and be compassionate with them that suffer the torment of such covetousness.

2. *I will say to my soul.* Luke xii. 19.

See how he erreth. *Thou hast much goods :* he calleth them goods which merit not that name. He calleth them *goods* of the *soul*, when they are the ruin thereof. *Laid up for many years :* when in a moment they may be snatched from him, or he from them. *Take thine ease :* he would find ease in that which bringeth nothing but labour and affliction. *Eat, drink, and be merry :* as one of the brutes he would feed the soul with that which is the proper food of the body. See how the love of earthly things entangleth a man in other affections, so that by the judgment of God he is called *Fool*. *Thou fool, this night. . .* Let this be thy conclusion. The more thou givest thy heart to earthly things, the more thou art a

fool: the more thou withdrawest thyself from these, the nearer thou art to wisdom.

3. *But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.* Luke xii. 20.

Behold the moment which bringeth all to an end. *This night*: where be the many years which he had promised to his soul? *Then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?* Thou shalt not take them with thee. What thou hast gathered shall pass to another. So then, having provided nothing to adorn thy soul, thou shalt be found naked. *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.* Do thou therefore direct thy mind a different way that thou mayest be *rich towards God*, in grace and in good works. See that thou appear not *poor and miserable*.

SATURDAY

IN WHAT MANNER WE MUST WAIT FOR THE LORD AT
THE LAST DAY.

1. *Let your loins be girded about.* Luke xii. 35.

He would have the loins girded both with the continence of chastity, and with control of the appetite lest it slip down earthward. An appetite that is ever trailing on the earth is like an overlong garment: it hampereth the feet of the soul upon the heavenly way. *And your lights burning*: the light of sound doctrine and of holy illumination, and that not in the mind alone, for knowledge, but in the hands, for active work. *And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord*, as though even now he might knock upon the door: for *the Lord is at hand* (Philippians iv. 5). See then where thou lackest in all this. The soul droopeth down with inordinate affec-

tion; it is often soiled with mud of earthly desires. Thou hast thy light burning in the mind, but it giveth not forth the light of charity. Thou hast lights likewise to shew thee what to do, but thou holdest them not in thy hands: there is no outward expression of them. Thou lookest not for thy Lord, for thou slumberest still in sluggishness. Poor wretch, what wilt thou do if at this moment the Lord appear?

2. *That when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.* Luke xii. 36.

Here is a mark of the watchful servant: he will not suffer any noise, for he must hear his lord's knock: his ear is turned towards the door, that he may open without delay; he hath all things ready, that he may not have then to begin to light the lamps and make due preparation. Is thy soul duly furnished, thy conscience in good order, thine inner mansion garnished well with merit and virtuous adornment? If they be so, blessed art thou. *For blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching.* But if hitherto thou hast lived without care for future things, weighed down with slumber and sleep, do thou at length awake. Every moment bringeth its danger with it; and on one moment dependeth an eternity.

3. *And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.* Luke xii. 39.

The thief marketh the hour when he will not be marked. If thou watch not at every hour, thy watchfulness at any hour is lacking: for he marketh that hour wherein thou watchest not. *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night* (2 Peter iii. 10). *Behold, the judge standeth before the door* (James v. 9). *Be ye therefore ready also: for the*

Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Marvel not that God taketh to Him the title of a thief: for thy sake He doth it, for a caution unto thee. Thou hast given a token for such as fear thee: that they may triumph because of the truth (Psalm lx. 4).

THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE PARABLE OF THE BARREN FIG TREE.

1. *A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Luke xiii. 6.*

Thou art this tree, planted in the vineyard of the Church, or of the clerical estate. The Master seeketh from thee fruit conformable to thine estate. For as every tree beareth fruit *after its kind*, so God seeketh no fruit from thee but that which appertaineth unto thy vocation. What fruits then hast hitherto put forth? How sparse they be! There hath been more of leaves than of fruit: of outward appearance than of true good works. Thine attire rather than thy life hath proclaimed thee a clergyman. God hath found no fruit in thee. And wilt thou, alas, continue thus to send Jesus hungry away?

2. *Then said he unto the dresser of the vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? Luke xiii. 7.*

And how many years hath the Lord waited for thee to bear some fruit? As many as He hath given thee of life, or of the religious state. How often hath He come in the way of admonition or of inspiration,

seeking, and urging thee to bear some fruit? And still even to this day thou abidest the same as ever, and shewest no improvement. How great is His patience with thee! how complete thine own sterility! Could He not have said ere this, *Why cumbereth it this holy ground*, wherein another would bear the richest fruit? What if He now say, *Cut it down*, O death: it is unworthy so to cumber the ground?

3. *And he answering said . . . Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.* Luke xiii. 8, 9.

This dresser acteth like a good superior. He loveth this fig tree, as the superior the soul of his subject: he will yet have patience. He would *dig it about*, by gentle reproof and admonition; he would *dung it*, by mortifications, if need be, by humiliations, by leading it to know its vileness, in hope that it may yet bear fruit: but whereto serveth a dresser, if thou wilt not be dressed?

MONDAY

A WOMAN, CROOKED FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS, IS HEALED.

1. *Behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.* Luke xiii. 11.

In this woman behold those souls which lie on their faces upon the ground, *turning their eyes down to the ground* (Psalm xvii. 11), whose affections are set on earthly things alone. Wherefore they never lift up the eyes of thought unto that which is divine and everlasting. What could be more miserable than such an one? But how many years hast thou spent bowed down with this infirmity! How little hast thou

thought upon God ! How hast thou been swallowed up in these muddy depths, crushed by those passions which ever hurled thee down ! O if even now thou mightest be lifted up !

2. *And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.* Luke xiii. 12.

Behold herein the loving-kindness of Jesus, calling us by His grace, and preventing our supplications. Never may we be loosed from the infirmities of passion, if we be not called of Jesus, and come nigh Him by imitation of His life. *And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight.* One touch of Jesus sufficed to raise her up. But how often hast thou been touched with the hand of the Lord, by afflictions within thee and without, yet still thou raisest not thyself to contemplate the things of God ! How often hath He touched thee in the Eucharist with His whole Body and His Blood, yet still thou savourest the things of earth !

3. *And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation* (Luke xiii. 14), alleging a violation of the sabbath. But the Lord shewed him that cures might be done with no such violation, inasmuch as an ass might be watered on the sabbath day. This man covered his envy at the glorious works of Christ with a cloke of reverence for the sabbath day. And if thou cloke thy faults with a shew of virtue ; if thou defend them by argument ; if thou pretend to virtue when in truth thou carest only for thine own way ; thou followest the example of this ruler.

TUESDAY

THE PHARISEES WOULD HAVE CHRIST FLEE.

1. *There came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence : for Herod will kill thee.* Luke xiii. 31.

Here was the Pharisees' politick device. They would make an end of Christ, yet feign friendship towards Him. Christ's fame and the plaudits of the people were grievous unto them. They seek out therefore some other pretext on which they may urge Him to flee. He that doeth well must endure envy. For this cause sometimes thou shalt find that thou art bidden to depart from the place where thou hast done good works, to relinquish a task whereby thou hast glorified God. Likewise the displeasure of the mighty will be urged against thee as a pretext. How art thou disposed hereunto?

2. *And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures.* Luke xiii. 32.

As if He would say, I do the duties of My state : therefore I fear not Herod. To do the duties of thy state and thy vocation is a sure shield against all manner of persecution. And what wilt thou do when hatred and calumny surround thee? *Cast out the devils of thy passions, and so shall no wickedness have dominion over thee.* What wilt thou do when envy thrusteth sore against thee? *Do cures:* depart not from thy sound mind; say not nor do what is unworthy.

3. *Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.* Luke xiii. 33.

Behold the constancy of Christ even in that moment when they would make Him afraid. He saith that He will persevere whatever danger He may meet. And what sayest thou when thou meetest difficulties? Seekest thou not to avoid them by changing place or task? Is this to walk in the way of virtue which is ever perfected through trials? What manner of virtue shewest thou herein? If thou look deep, thou shalt find it the token of the love of self, and of a mind that loveth its own way.

WEDNESDAY

A MAN WITH DROPSY IS HEALED.

1. *And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him.* Luke xiv. 1.

Why becometh He their guest, when He knoweth their malice? That He may teach them and do them good. He set the good of others before His own. What doest thou when others are ill affected unto thee? Dost thou not turn thyself from them and avoid their company? *They watched him*, and found fault with His actions. Be thou ready to be watched by all men and in all thou dost: else thou shalt not keep charity which *suffereth long, and is kind, and beareth all things.*

2. *And behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.* Luke xiv. 2.

As S. Austin biddeth thee, behold thyself in this man. *Thou hast the dropsy of concupiscence.* The more thou indulgest it, the worse it groweth. The more thou yieldest to it, the stronger it becometh. Would that thou knewest not this in thine experience! See then with what earnest care thou must restrain it lest they get the dominion over thee: so shalt thou be undefiled and innocent from the great offence (Psalm xix. 13).

3. *Jesus . . . spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?* Luke xiv. 3.

A prudent question to ask thyself before thou doest anything: *Is it lawful?* And he took him, and healed him, and let him go. To take him was to claim possession of him. So saith Sedulius: *He*

hasteth to cure him for he desired him for his own. No man is truly whole in mind unless Christ make him His own. He would have thee also : why dost thou struggle against Him, and prefer to be thine own?

THURSDAY

CHRIST TEACHETH THE PHARISEES AGAINST AMBITION.

1. *When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room.* Luke xiv. 8.

This maxim forbiddeth the seeking of the higher room and of all such honours because of the confusion of face which will follow when with justice another is preferred. If thou set thyself above another, God's judgment straightway preferreth him above thee. This is but just : for thou settest thyself above Christ. God forbid, thou sayest. Yet this is so, unless thou make thyself the lowest of all. For Christ so made Himself, *despised and rejected of men.* Therefore if there is but one above whom thou settest thyself, thou settest thyself above Christ who set Himself below that man. Justly therefore he above whom thou settest thyself is preferred above thee by the judgment of God, who hath set over all Him that was *despised of men.*

2. *When thou art bidden . . . sit down in the lowest room.* Luke xiv. 10.

Here is a maxim which maketh for humility. Christ would have thee take that place which He chose for Himself : He chose to be *despised* : He *made himself of no reputation.* Wouldest thou not be as near as thou mayest to Christ? Then thou must set thyself below all men, since He took the lowest place.

3. *Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* Luke xiv. 11.

The order of the world is one, and the order of God is another. He that is lower in this is higher in that. In the order of the world Christ is last; in the order of God He is first. Therefore as far as thou hast brought thyself low with Christ in the order of man, so far in the order of God shalt thou be with Him exalted. How therefore canst thou be so blind as not to be willing to be among the lowest? What couldest thou more desire than to be near to Christ? Answer, and blush for shame.

FRIDAY

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP.

1. *Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees . . . murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.* Luke xv. 1, 2.

How far the spirit of Christ differeth from the pride of the Pharisees! They look down upon sinners with contempt, and avoid them as unclean: Christ draweth them to Himself, and receiveth them with gentleness. Which spirit hath the mastery in thee? They murmur that He *receiveth sinners*. Miserable were we, if He did not so. If He had not received thee, how wouldest thou now grovel in the abyss!

2. *And he spake this parable unto them* (Luke xv. 3), expounding the course of His action and the end for which He came, giving them the reason wherefore He received sinners. *What man . . . if he lose one of . . . an hundred sheep:* that is, if Christ out of all reasonable creatures in heaven and in earth

lose mankind alone, or thee alone, *doth not leave the ninety and nine* (the angels), *and go after that which is lost*, even after thee? He hath sought thee, amid what straits and sorrows! through what torments! What rough ways He hath trodden from the stable to the Cross! He hath found thee: He hath laid thee on His shoulders; He hath brought thee to the fold wherein thou hast thy life. Own the shamefulness of thy past wanderings: how seeking one deceitful pasture of delight, thou camest to the brink of the precipice. Own likewise the loving-kindness of thy Saviour Jesus, who sought thee and found thee and brought thee to this fold. God forbid that thou shouldst ever go astray again!

3. *And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which I had lost.* Luke xv. 6.

O the goodness of my Lord Jesus! It is I who should call together all creation to rejoice with me, for that I have been found and brought to life: yet He rejoiceth, as though the finding of me were gain to Him. If God hath such joy in finding of thee, withdraw not thyself from Him any more: nay, give thyself to Him afresh.

SATURDAY

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

1. *A certain man* (which is God) *had two sons* (which be the righteous and the sinners): *and the younger of them* (the sinner) *said . . . Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me* (Luke xv. 11, 12) (those talents of nature and of grace which God dispenseth to good and bad alike). *And he*

divided unto them his living. For each man hath these gifts from God for the highest end, that we may all use them for the obtaining of eternal life. Whether thou be righteous man or sinner how much hast thou received from thy Father! What natural gifts! What store of graces! Had He given the same to another, what would he not have wrought with them? And what doest thou?

2. *And not many days after.* Luke xv. 13.

The sinner refraineth not many days from sin. *The younger son . . . took his journey*, far from the heavenly country, and from God his Father, *into a far country*, that the very distance from his home might minister to licentiousness and remove the check of his father's eye: *and there wasted his substance* (his state of grace, his supernatural endowment), and likewise poisoned his intellect and will, *with riotous living*, indulging every lust. Would that it were not thou that art represented in this parable! Consider the years of thy youth. *O remember not the sins and offences of my youth: . . . O Lord* (Psalm xxv. 6).

3. *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.* Luke xv. 14.

He that hath naught of God is ever in want, and he likewise that liveth after his own lusts: for lust is *the fire that saith not, It is enough* (Proverbs xxx. 16). *And he went and joined himself to a citizen*, to a devil, that is, or to an evil habit, *and he sent him into his fields to feed swine*, even to follow his own lusts and sensuality. *And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks of sin which the swine in hell did eat: and no man gave unto him* to satisfy his hunger, for the more he sinned the more he craved for sinning like a famished man. Behold the sinner's sad estate.

To what a pass cometh he that goeth away from God and returneth not straightway! O glorious creature of God, adorned with so many gifts, how low art thou fallen by thine own free choice!

THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE PRODIGAL SON COMETH TO HIMSELF AND
REPENTETH.

1. *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!* Luke xv. 17.

The way of penitence is here set forth: and the first step is the acknowledging of a man's own wretched state. If thine be less wretched than the prodigal's, at least it might be happier than it is: thou must aspire thereto. Thou art in no far country, for thou livest among the children of God: yet thou sufferest from the lack of many virtues and, sad to say, hungerest not after them. In the way of perfection the first step is hunger after righteousness.

2. *I will arise and go to my father.* Luke xv. 18.

Here have we his resolve to tarry no longer amid the errors of the wicked, together with hope of pardon founded on consideration of his father's love. Thou hast seen how thou liest in a country of imperfection: say then to thyself at last, *I will arise*: my heavenly Father, that willeth not the death of a sinner, will not cast me out. Often hast thou said the words, *I will arise*; but never hast seriously given them effect. Here was no resolution of thy will, but mere dalliance of thy fancy. Now therefore say thus, I now arise from this imperfection: I will die rather than fall into it again.

3. *And will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.* Luke xv. 18.

Here have we a frank confession with humble contrition for the only reason that he hath offended his father. If a good son unwittingly inflict a wound upon his father what will he feel when he knoweth what he hath done? His sole grief will be that he hath injured his father. Now thou hast done injury to thy Father, not indeed with such full intent as that thou didst remember that it was thy Father, yet neither with such ignorance as to make thine act no sin. *Wilt thou not from this time cry unto him, My father?* (Jeremiah iii. 4). *And am no more worthy to be called thy son.* Here he maketh the satisfaction that is called *privative*, in that he freely depriveth himself of a good thing which he might have. *Make me as one of thy hired servants.* This is a *positive* satisfaction, in that he willet to be hardly dealt with. Do thou the like. As often as thou committest sin, deprive thyself of some delights, and sternly afflict thyself with penance of the senses. *And he arose, and came to his father.* Here is the execution of his resolve. Would that thou likewise wouldest straightway execute thine own! How miserable a fate to be ever in labour and never to bring forth.

MONDAY

THE PRODIGAL SON IS RECEIVED WITH JOY BY HIS
FATHER.

1. *When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion . . . and fell on his neck, and kissed him.* Luke xv. 20.

At this point consider the loving-kindness of God to thee a sinner. He seeth his contrite heart and loveth it, and reproacheth him not with his evil behaviour.

How should this mercy and loving-kindness stir thee to confidence and love! Thou shouldest be ready to suffer all the torments in the world and endure a shameful death rather than go from Him any more, when He hath so graciously welcomed thy return to Him.

2. *But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe.* Luke xv. 22.

This is that first adornment of justifying grace. *And put a ring on his hand*, the sign of the liberty of the children of God: *and shoes*, the token of nobility in God's sight, *on his feet*, that is, let his affections be shod with due restraint. *And bring hither the fatted calf*, even Christ Himself in the Eucharist, *and let us . . . be merry*. Behold the joy of God over thee, a sinner that repentest. Ah, rob Him not thereof, returning to the swine!

3. *Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came . . . he heard musick . . . and asked what these things meant.* Luke xv. 25, 26.

He heard that his brother was come again, and that he was honoured with a banquet, *and he was angry and would not go in*. Think not that the righteous have envy, for they have it not: think rather how God's great love in the receiving of a penitent might move even the righteous unto envy; and rouse thyself to come boldly unto Him as often as thou art guilty even of a light offence: inasmuch as to receive penitent sinners is His greatest joy. To satisfy his elder son the father saith to him, *Thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine*. This verily is the portion of the righteous, to be with the Lord and share with Him the good things of heaven. What consolation is here! *Thou art ever with me*: and what blessedness! *All that I have is thine*. Who would wish to forsake the good Father?

TUESDAY

OF THE UNJUST STEWARD.

1. *A certain . . . man . . . had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.* Luke xvi. 1, 2.

In this steward behold thyself: for not as to an owner but a steward hath God bestowed on thee all goods, bodily and spiritual, natural and supernatural. Though thou mayest think thou hast acquired somewhat by thine own endeavour, yet in truth thou hast nothing of thine own. Therefore it is thy duty to lay all out at God's good pleasure. The hour will come when thou shalt hear Him say, *Give an account*; how, wherefore, and on what thou hast expended them? All that redoundeth not to the glory of God hath been wasted. Make up thine account without delay, for that hour draweth nigh.

2. *Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship.* Luke xvi. 3.

Why is the steward thus anxious? Because he knoweth how ill he hath fulfilled his stewardship, and that it will assuredly be taken away from him. But thou remainest untouched by all anxiety concerning the giving of thine account. If thou wouldest take to heart with what unfaithfulness thou hast administered the goods entrusted to thee, how wouldest thou be tormented with salutary grief! Consider: on what hast thou spent thy bodily powers and senses, thine intellect, thy thoughts, thy will, thine affections? Thou art not ignorant that thou shouldest have spent all these to the glory of God. Hast thou so done? How much hath been assigned to the world, to the

flesh, to the love of thyself, to vainglory? So then if thou wouldest conceive a salutary care for all this, thou must now gravely bethink thee what thou shalt do. Afterward it will be too late to labour, and too late to seek for help.

3. *And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.* Luke xvi. 8.

To look to the future betokeneth much prudence. Herein are the children of light surpassed by the children of the world after their own kind. How diligently do they adapt the means to the end! With what carefulness they leave nothing untried! How urgent are they *to attain a corruptible crown!* And thou, a child of light, called for a nobler purpose, dowered with more grace, assisted by a mightier power, what doest thou? The children of the world seek to please the world, thou to please God. What watchings are theirs, what toils and difficulties! How do they ponder day and night how they may survive! And dost endure such labours to the full for God and for eternity?

WEDNESDAY

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH GLUTTON AND OF LAZARUS.

1. *There was a certain rich man, which was clothed with purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.* Luke xvi. 19—21.

(1) Which of the twain judgest thou happy, and

which unhappy? If thou judge by thy senses, thou wilt call the rich man happy, and Lazarus miserable. But faith teacheth the contrary. To which dost thou assent? Is it not the senses which err? Yet what indulgence shewest thou towards them! How, on the other hand, thou loathest to be oppressed with poverty, or troubled by anything which molesteth thy senses! Yet what thou fleest leadeth to salvation, and what thou pursuest to destruction.

2. *And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.* Luke xvi. 22.

Behold the end of that lowly and painful condition which in this world was despised. The short affliction endeth soon and issueth in undying joy. How *light is our affliction, which is but for a moment*, in that it *worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* (2 Corinthians iv. 17). Weigh them in the balances, *for a moment*, and *eternal*, and see if *the sufferings of this present time are . . . worthy to be compared with the glory* (Romans viii. 18).

3. *The rich man also died, and was buried.* Luke xvi. 22.

Such is the end of him that seemed happy according to the flesh. *They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave* (Job xxi. 13). If thou yet perceivest not how unhappy is life that is lived for the senses, understand it from the end thereof. The madness of that joy which is for a moment is followed by the eternal *Woe*. How wise it were to fear any indulgence of thy senses, to afflict them and bring them into bondage! Now to guard thee lest thou indulge them overmuch, indulge them no further than necessity demandeth.

THURSDAY

THE GLUTTON'S TORMENT.

1. *He lift up his eyes . . . and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.* Luke xvi. 23.

When Lazarus was near at hand he would not look on him. Now he seeth him afar off. Whom he despised in his infirmity he now beholdeth in glory. So changeth the old order to the new. He maketh his request: *Father Abraham, have mercy on me.* But it is too late. The time of mercy is past: the time of eternal justice is at hand. Thou must achieve in this life what thou wouldest enjoy eternally. *Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue.* Peradventure with his tongue he had mocked the poverty of Lazarus, and his torment was increased thereby. What of thyself, if with thy tongue thou hast put forth taunts, and biting words, and slanderous speech?

2. *But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things.* Luke xvi. 25.

What were they? The lusts of the flesh; for he *fared sumptuously every day*: the lusts of the eyes; for he was *rich*; the pride of life; for *he was clothed with purple and fine linen.* And likewise Lazarus *evil things*; for he was *a beggar*, distressed with sores, and nothing accounted of. *But now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* Such is the alternation: joy here, and torment there; torment here, and joy there. Be not persuaded that thou canst have sensual joy here, and spiritual there. For every affliction thou dealest to thy bodily senses, thou shalt have joy hereafter; but all that thou grantest to their importunity is so much loss of joy and glory for thy soul.

3. *They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.* Luke xvi. 29.

Such is the answer to the glutton when he asketh that Lazarus should be sent to his brethren to certify them of punishment to come. Demand not that God should guide thee into life eternal by means extraordinary, as by appearing to thee Himself, or sending an angel to make clear His will. Thou hast channels of Divine teaching: enquire of them. For so is God's ordered way of governing the world. Therefore thou must make use of ordinary means and do thy diligence to observe the precepts of the law.

FRIDAY

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST JUDGE AND THE WIDOW.

1. *Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* Luke xviii. 1.

Prayer is a present defence in danger. If therefore there is no moment free of danger, men ought to pray always. But what time is there when thou art not in danger from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and there is not a struggle between the spirit and the flesh? The less thou deservest it, the more grievous is the peril. Pray, and faint not. When thou faintest, the enemy waxeth strong. God helpeth them that pray instantly and in truth.

2. *There was a widow . . . and she came unto the judge, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while.* Luke xviii. 3.

Though he was an unjust judge, *which feared not God, neither regarded man*, yet day by day this widow importuned him, and though so often rejected ceased not to beseech. Thou thinkest that God hath rejected thee because thou obtainest not from Him deliverance from this or that temptation. God will *not for a time*. And yet He will: for so long as He taketh not from thee the spirit of prayer that is His

answer, inasmuch as thy very prayer is a shield whereby He giveth thee protection. If thou throw away the shield, cast not the blame on God.

3. *But afterward this judge said within himself. . . . This widow troubleth me, I will avenge her.* Luke xviii. 5.

If the unjust judge so did, *shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?* Lo, thou hast a promise of vengeance against thine adversaries. If thou canst see no fulfilment, that is a sign that thy prayer is not like that widow's. Say now, where is thy heart when thou prayest against that enemy which flattereth the flesh and striveth against the spirit? The heart is ever swayed by estimation. Peradventure thou esteemest not aright the power of thy foes; fleshly affection, and love of thyself. How then is it credible that thou shouldest pray against them with all thy heart? Thou must see that thou art thine own enemy, and treat thyself accordingly. Conspire not with thine enemy.

SATURDAY

THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN AT PRAYER.

1. *The Pharisee stood.* Luke xviii. 11.

Is that an humble posture before the face of God : *And prayed . . . God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are.* See this man's arrogance, who despiseth all others in comparison with himself, allowing no exception. *Extortioners, unjust, adulterers.* Such is his judgment of others, while he exalteth himself. *Even as this publican.* He that is

lofty in his own eyes ever judgeth his neighbour rashly, though he knoweth not the secrets of his heart. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* Behold his vain boasting of his spiritual riches. What morsel of praying is there in all this saying of his prayers? Thou condemnest the boastful Pharisee. Take heed then that thou be not like him, despising others, well pleasing to thyself. *Say not, I have enough* (Ecclesiasticus xi. 24).

2. *And the publican, standing afar off* (Luke xviii. 13), standing indeed, but not holding up his head, deeming himself unworthy to draw nearer to the altar. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven;* such was the shame he hid within his breast. *But smote upon his breast, heartbroken, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.* Humbly he asketh pardon. See here the right form and method of thy prayer. Let thy prayer and thy meditation be ever humble, occupied in gaining knowledge of thyself and purging the heart from vain affections.

3. *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.* Luke xviii. 14.

Here hast thou God's judgment on these two that prayed. The humble is justified: the proud is condemned. So thou shalt rise up the better for thy prayer if therein thou hast been occupied in humble knowledge of thyself in deep humility, and in such affections as flow therefrom. Here S. Austin saith: *Behold, brethren, humility with evil deeds pleaseth God better than pride with goodness. God doth so hate the proud.* So then henceforth thou must neither praise thyself, nor seek for others' commendation. Then shalt thou live, content with God and with thyself.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

WE MUST BECOME CHILDREN AGAIN FOR THE KINGDOM
OF GOD.

1. *They brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them.* Luke xviii. 15.

We are much influenced by the principles imbued in us in early years. Of this thou hast experience. Would that thou hadst then been brought to Christ, or hadst welcomed the teaching of them that would have brought thee to him! Hast thou failed herein? Then it is expedient that now at last thou become a little child in the way of virtue, and the more recent thy vocation, the more doth this behove thee. For on this beginning dependeth all that remaineth of thy life.

2. *But when his disciples saw it they rebuked them. But Jesus . . . said, Suffer little children to come unto me.* Luke xviii. 15, 16.

Christ sheweth how He loveth that innocent souls should come to Him. Didst thou come to Him in innocence? Thou hast received a grace which is beyond price. Therein there lieth on thee a heavier obligation to keep that innocence now that thou livest with Him. Therefore ever pray to the Lord that for this end He may touch thy heart in the Eucharist. Hast thou the charge of children in thine own vocation? Take greater heed to draw them to Christ by virtuous conduct, than to fill their minds with the light of knowledge. The one is as much thine obligation as the other. For the fulfilment of both thou shalt make answer unto God.

3. *Of such is the kingdom of God.* Luke xviii. 16.

Observe, he saith, not *Of these*, who have no power to sin, but *of such*, even of those whose virtuous wills

refrain therefrom. Thou must then become a child again : thou must know nothing of sin or imperfection, and so do well ; thou must be led to goodness by what seemeth a natural simplicity of purpose ; otherwise the decree standeth that *Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.*

MONDAY

A RICH YOUNG MAN IS INSTRUCTED HOW TO ATTAIN ETERNAL LIFE.

1. *Behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?* Matthew xix. 16.

How deep was the desire of eternal life in the heart of this young man ! How deep is it in thine ? Thou mayest fathom it by the earnestness of thy pursuit. If thou carest little and seldom, thy desire is naught. Yet without it thou canst not attain. Day by day then ask rather *What shall I do?* than *What shall I teach, or learn, or say?* Heaven is not to be entered by manifold knowledge or by words, but by deeds alone.

2. *And he said unto him . . . If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* Matthew xix. 17.

Had the Master bidden thee do some great thing, surely it would have been thy duty to do it : how much more when now He saith *Keep the commandments!* Obedience is the road to heaven. And *his commandments are not grievous* (1 John v. 3), inasmuch as the Giver of the law giveth likewise aid to keep it. But without Him thou canst do nothing.

3. *The young man saith unto him, All these have I kept from my youth up.* Matthew xix. 20.

Happy wert thou if thou couldest say the same in respect of thine own youth when thou livedst in the world! Happy if thou couldest even claim to have observed all God's commandments since the day when thou enteredst on thy ministry! How far thou art from either this or that! This should be thy motive for accurate observance, that here is the road along which God will guide thee to salvation.

TUESDAY

THE RICH YOUNG MAN IS ADVISED TO SEEK PERFECTION.

1. *Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. Matthew xix. 21.*

Mark beginneth by telling us that *Jesus beholding him loved him* (Mark x. 21). But how shewed He His love? By teaching him the way of perfection, and promising heavenly treasure. For He teacheth him not only how to be saved, but how to excel in glory. Thou likewise art called unto perfection: how great thy happiness if thou ensue it well! Is that not worthless which thou hast renounced? Is that not a boon indeed which hath replaced it? Thou mayest yet increase thy treasure if ever more and more thou purge thy heart from worldly longings.

2. *But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Matthew xix. 22.*

See the mischief of affection for created things. It enforceth separation between Christ and this young man, though innocent of all offence. But herewith thou also art infected. Thou willest to keep this comfort or that, and yet not lose thy heavenly treasure. But heaven is won not by giving more, but

by retaining less. *I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction* (Isaiah xlviii. 10). He is chosen who in this furnace of poverty is thoroughly refined. How standeth thine affection towards this way of gaining heaven? Hast thou torn it quite clear of creaturely desires?

3. *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Matthew xix. 23.

Here standeth the truth, plainly written down. And the converse is this: A poor man shall easily enter into the kingdom of heaven. Truly thou mayest rejoice if God hath set thee in that way towards heaven by which thou shalt find it more easily. Yet think it not enough to have forsaken all, unless thou likewise forsake thyself and withdraw thine affection from created things. For it is not riches which block the way to heaven, but thyself, and thine inordinate affections.

WEDNESDAY

THE REWARD OF THEM THAT FORSAKE ALL AND FOLLOW CHRIST.

1. *Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?* Matthew xix. 27.

There be two pleas which Peter putteth forth before he asketh concerning reward: (1) We have forsaken all; (2) we have followed thee; and thereby implieth that he would not dare so to ask if he could not shew so much of achievement. Hast thou forsaken all? Hast thou forsaken thyself, thy care for comfort, and honours, and the things of sense? How falsely dost thou claim to have *forsaken all*, if

thou hast not forsaken these! Hast thou followed Christ? in poverty and in contempt?

2. *And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit . . . ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Matthew xix. 28.*

It is meet that they who for love of Christ have forsaken all and been despised should receive honour from Him. What joy will it then be to have chosen Christ in poverty and contempt! Wherefore then dost thou not presently make such a choice? Standeth the truth now one way and then another? The day of the Lord shall reveal the error on which thou now reliest; and the truth which now thou spurnest. For the price of honour in the next world is contempt in this.

3. *And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters . . . or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. Matthew xix. 29.*

A reward is promised to them that forsake their own. How great? An hundredfold. Nor is the reward postponed to the next life, but is bestowed in this: what could be better? And thereto is added the assurance of eternal life; what could be happier? Why then, O my soul, art thou sometimes sorrowful? Can it be that thou art not content with thy hundredfold? I have not received it, thou sayest. But thou liest. *There is no man that hath left all, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time . . . with persecutions* (Mark x. 29, 30). If thou sayest thou hast not received it, thou makest God a liar. I feel it not, thou sayest. Then thou hast not left all, nor despoiled thyself of everything. If thou wouldest know the truth of this, empty out all thine affections.

THURSDAY

THE PARABLE OF THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD.

1. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder (the which is God), which went out early in the morning (about the third hour, the sixth, the ninth) to men of every age, to hire labourers into his vineyard (Matthew xx. 1), that is to appoint to each his own state of life.*

And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? Own thou that God hath called thee into the vineyard of the Church and give Him thanks. If peradventure thou wert idle before thy call see that thou be not so here. Nothing is more thine own than time: the use thereof dependeth upon thyself alone. Thou canst use every moment either for life or death. Yet nothing is less thine own: thou mayest not misuse it, as thou mayest not misuse thy life: For whether we live, we live unto the Lord (Romans xiv. 8). How much of time thou wastest in idle talking! Every hour thou shewest thyself negligent of so much glory as thou mightest have wrought good works therein. So saith S. Bonaventure.

2. *So when even was come. Matthew xx. 8.*

In the moment after death the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers and give them their hire. What consolation will be in that word, but to labourers only, not to the idle. Think often on that eventide. The things that shall come upon them make haste (Deut. xxxii. 35). So He giveth equal hire to all, though some have laboured a longer, others a shorter, time. For God looketh rather at the fervour and purity of heart with which thy work is done, than at the time thou mayest have

spent upon it. Whether thou camest to it in the morning or at even, thou shalt have a reward according to thy fervour. Flatter not thyself in reckoning up the years of thy ministry : God weigheth thy fruits of spiritual advance.

3. *When the first came . . . when they had received it, they murmured.* Matthew xx. 10, 11.

Such is ever the fault of the elders who have grown lukewarm. They think that more is owing to them because they have been a longer time in the ministry. They think not to ask in what spirit or with what profit. *We have borne the burden and heat of the day.* They look down on others. *These last have wrought but one hour*—these boys, born yesterday ! They contrast not their own lukewarmness with the fervour of the young. Finally they fall into envy, if a well-deserving youth be granted some relief or raised to a place of honour : *thou hast made them equal unto us.* It is a just answer they receive : *I do thee no wrong.* Away with all such thoughts. Advance in virtue and desert as thou dost in years.

FRIDAY

OF THE SICKNESS OF LAZARUS.

1. *Therefore Lazarus' sisters sent unto Jesus saying, . . . Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.* John xi. 3.

They approach the good Physician with confidence and true indifference to ask for healing for their brother. They make no mention of their deserving, nor of their love for Christ, nor of their brother's love. They only plead Christ's love for him. The only force which biddeth Him do us good is that love for us which moveth Him. *Jesus . . . said, This*

sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God. Thou mayest rightly judge that the sickness was for the good of Lazarus, inasmuch the glory of God was promoted thereby. Pass the same judgment on all that may go amiss with thee, lest thou take glory from God.

2. *Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.* John xi. 5.

How then came it to pass that *when he had heard . . . that he was sick, he abode two days . . . in the same place where he was.* Is this then love to refuse succour in due time? to allow His friend to die, His friends to be afflicted? Such is the love of God: not a soft affection but one that ministereth to the end for which we were created. He suffereth Lazarus to die, nay, He willeth, because it is for the glory of God. Dost thou truly believe that God willeth the afflictions which thou sufferest? Certainly they could never touch thee if He willed them not. Believe thou then that they are for the glory of God: for whatever He willeth He willeth for this end. If thou wilt take this to heart, thou shalt find them lighter to bear.

3. *Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there.* John xi. 14, 15.

Jesus would teach us that what we think to be evil is so ordered by His providence that it turneth out to be good. Such is the fruit God willeth to proceed from thy afflictions, if thou impede it not. Dost thou suffer? It is His will, in order that thou mayest be confirmed in the faith that He is Master, and thou His servant: that He may dispose of thee at His will, and thou must obey, *Nevertheless let us go unto him.* Be that thy consolation in every trouble which God saith unto us in the Psalms: *I am with him in trouble* (Psalm xci. 15).

SATURDAY

JESUS COMETH TO BETHANY TO RAISE LAZARUS FROM
THE DEAD.

1. *Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days.* John xi. 17.

God cometh not to help in our affliction, but only in our desperation. He would teach us that inasmuch as human aid proved useless it was indeed Himself who came to help : or it may be that He willeth us to use our best endeavours while we may. Therefore let thy hope in the Lord be such that thou still work with Him and help thyself : but likewise let thy working not draw thee from putting thy whole hope in God alone.

2. *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.* John xi. 21.

So complained the two sisters, Martha and Mary, albeit modestly and lovingly. If they think that being absent in body He could not have prevented Lazarus' death, they err. He could, but would not : nay, He delayed His coming to shew them that it was not His will. How strange is it that we should wish to draw God's will to ours ! This is the very opposite of what is right. God's will is the rule of our life. If thou submit thy will to His entirely, no evil can ever happen unto thee : for, being God, He cannot will that which is evil.

3. *Martha called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come and calleth for thee.* John xi. 28.

Faithful Martha would have her sister share the consolation. Here is Mary's consolation : *The Master is come* ; and here the sweetness thereof ; *He calleth for thee*. Now see her affection and her love. *As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.* Is thy love great enough to move thee to

such haste when God calleth thee either by the token of holy obedience or by interior inspiration? Art thou not detained sometimes by little human consolations? Remember how Martha left *the Jews . . . which were with her in the house, and comforted her.*

THE TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1. *When Jesus therefore saw her weeping . . . he groaned in the spirit and . . . wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!* John xi. 33, 35, 36.

From those few tears which Jesus shed for Lazarus the Jews perceive His great love for him. They conceive not of it fully, yet reverently wonder. Christ hath done more than this for thee, hath shed His Blood, hath laid down His life; in the Holy Eucharist hath given thee Himself. Dost thou yet fail to understand His love? If thou didst understand thou wouldest repay it; and that not in word but deed. But 'tis very sure thou shewest not such love as this. For of what sort be thy works?

2. *Jesus said, Take ye away the stone.* John xi. 39.

The circumstances of the raising of Lazarus are a type of what is needed for thee to rise from thine imperfectness. Thou must take away the stone, that is, every affection which might hinder thee from rising. Jesus could remove it by a word, but biddeth thee take it away, because He desireth thee to work with Him. Thou wouldest that He would make thee holy by His own mere act, and spare thy pains. *Martha . . . saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.* I must confess the foulness of mine imperfections, wherein I have lain not four days, but many years. But behold

the goodness of Jesus. This foul stench restraineth Him not from raising up the dead: and wretched were I if His goodness were less great.

3. *Then they took away the stone.* John xi. 41.

Once more thou mayest see the stages of thine own rising in that which happened to Lazarus and that which Jesus did. (1) *Then they took away the stone*: because we must lay aside all hardness of heart and obstinacy of mean affections. (2) *Jesus lifted up his eyes*: because our thoughts must be turned from the things of earth to those of heaven. (3) *He cried with a loud voice*: because He willeth thee to hear Him, that thou mayest hearken to His inspirations. (4) *Lazarus came forth, bound hand and foot*; because after a thousand resolutions whereby thou seemest to thyself to rise and live, there yet cleave to thee thine evil habits. It is of these that He saith *Loose him*; that thou mayest do thy diligence to be rid of them.

MONDAY

THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE SEEK FOR THE FIRST PLACE.

1. *Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, . . . desiring a certain thing of him. . . . Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask.* Matthew xx. 20—22.

Their minds be set on a kingdom, but Christ's upon the cross. Yea, in the very school of Christ is ambition found. In this school thou shouldest have learned humility and contempt of thyself. A poor pupil thou art, savouring the things of earth and stickling for dignity, even when Christ is rejected. Truly thou knowest not what thou askest. The

Kingdom of God is not in honour but in contempt. Thou wiltest to escape this, and yet possess the kingdom. Ah, the folly of it!

2. *He said unto them, Are ye able to drink of the cup?* Matthew xx. 22.

He sheweth how that kingdom must be gained : not by sitting still, but by violence and suffering and mortification. *That I shall drink of.* If Jesus say to thee, I, thy Lord and God, will go before thee—the cup is bitter, and for the very thought thereof I shall sweat blood—what wilt thou answer? Resolve thyself : say boldly, By thy grace I can and will. It is less bitter now that Jesus hath drunk it. What hast thou not done for the sake of the poisonous glory of this world? And wilt thou hold heaven more cheap?

3. *To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give.* Matthew xx. 23.

Not unto you that foster ambition and as yet have not deserved the boon, but would claim it by right of kindred blood. *He denieth his own power to give, but his creatures' right to receive,* saith S. Ambrose. And S. Bernard, *The kingdom of heaven is not prepared for persons but for them that have so lived as to merit it.* It is merit that Christ demandeth. Where is thy merit? How sluggish thine affection! How inert thy hand!

TUESDAY

SIGHT RESTORED TO THE BLIND MAN AT JERICHO.

1. *Blind Bartimæus . . . sat by the highway side begging.* Mark x. 46.

In this blind man behold the condition of thine own soul. (1) Thou art blind to the things of God, applying not thy mind to understand them : seeking

the light of this world, thou lovest the light of heaven. (2) Thou *sittest* in thy mental sloth, making no spiritual advance for all thy many years of priesthood. (3) Thou art *by the highway side*, instead of on the highway of observance of thy rule of life. (4) Thou art *begging* thy poor consolations from the creatures which perish, and not from God, whom thou despisest. Art thou not both weary and ashamed of this thy sad estate?

2. *When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out.* Mark x. 47.

For the cure of thy soul thou must do what he did for the cure of his body. (1) He seizeth the first opportunity. How many hast thou lost already! To-day's may be the last. (2) Rebuked by the multitude he crieth the more, *Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me*. Thou wilt not please the world, and thy passions will rage against thee: yet persevere; thou must withstand thy senses. (3) *He, casting away his garment, rose*. Thou must cast away the cloke of thine hypocrisy, and walk in candidness of mind.

3. *Jesus . . . said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?* Mark x. 51.

Great is the goodness of God: but how perverted art thou in thy blindness if He must ask thee what thou wouldest that He should do unto thee; and thou askest not rather with readiness and holy indifference *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* (Acts ix. 6): if thou wilt not see how far better it is that thou shouldest cleave fast unto the will of God, than try to bend His will to thine. Say therefore with the blind man, *Lord, that I might receive my sight*, and see Thy will: and when thou seest it then by its light thou must follow *Jesus in the way*.

WEDNESDAY

ZACCHÆUS SEEKETH TO SEE JESUS.

1. *And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was.* Luke xix. 2, 3.

Here is a thing rare and therefore marvellous. One that is *rich and chief of the publicans* desireth to see Jesus. But this was of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which inspiration led him to *seek*. Thus thou mayest learn that his desire was not feeble nor of mere curiosity, but effectual in outward act. I know that thou wouldest see Jesus; but thou seekest not, nor appliest such means as would lead thee unto Him. Therefore thou art miserably consumed with empty longings.

2. *And could not for the press, because he was little of stature.* Luke xix. 3.

Here be two causes that impede thy seeing of God and closer union with Him. The one is *the press*, the tumult of thine affections and the uncontrolled passions of thy heart. These dull thy mind when thou wouldest apply it unto God. The other is thy littleness whereby thou failest either to overtop these things or to break through them. Confess that this is true, that thy knowledge of thyself may lead thee to crush them down.

3. *And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.* Luke xix. 4.

What must thou do to see Jesus? (1) Thou must *run before* the press, by careful premeditation and avoidance of those occasions which oft lead thee to give way to passion. Thou failest because thou bethinkest not thyself as thou shouldest do. (2) Thou

must set thyself where Christ is *to pass*: thou must seek out opportunities of well doing and embrace them. (3) Thou must *climb up into a sycamore*, that is, as S. Ambrose saith, must *trample under foot the vanities of the world*. Thou must not refuse what the people of this world deem foolishness. How art thou minded unto all this?

THURSDAY

ZACCHÆUS SHEWETH HOSPITALITY TO CHRIST.

1. *Jesus . . . looked up, and saw him, and said . . . Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.* Luke xix. 5, 6.

Other places of repose were open unto Christ: He chose the house of Zacchæus for that he was filled with greatest desire to see Him. It is our desire then that chiefly draweth Jesus unto us. Cease not to desire Him, even when thou hast already found Him. There ever remaineth somewhat more to seek. Whatever thou mayest know or do, there is more that thou knowest not nor doest. The fruit of such desire is that Christ turneth Him unto us. And what is the manner of His turning? *I must abide*, He saith, as though compelled by necessity; not, I must turn aside and so pass on. Wouldest thou that this should happen unto thee? Then kindle within thyself desire of Christ.

2. *And Zacchæus stood, now generously disposed to trample this world's goods beneath his feet, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.* Luke xix. 8.

Desire for absent Christ is transformed into love of Him now present : and as this love could not exist along with the love of temporal things, contempt of these springeth up forthwith. How often doth Christ turn aside to tarry with thee, the very same as He that tarried with Zacchæus ! Yet hast thou not contempt for thy comforts and sensual delights. Wherefore ? Because thou hast no lively desire or love of Christ. If I mistake thee, shew by what actions thou makest proof of thy love.

3. *Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house.* Luke xix. 9.

Euthymius thus commenteth : *Salvation is come by the casting forth of the destruction which had occupied that house.* Hearest thou ? There can be no salvation, until destruction is cast forth. *Thou hast destroyed thyself* (Hosea xiii. 9). So then, there can be no salvation for thee until thou hast cast out thyself ; until thou expel the love of pre-eminence, of comfort, and of glory. If these things still cleave unto thy heart thou art as yet far from salvation ; nor doth Christ dwell within thee. Depart thou from thyself, and Christ will draw nigh and bring salvation with Him.

FRIDAY

THE CORN OF WHEAT THAT FALLETH INTO THE GROUND.

1. *Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.* John xii. 24.

Jesus spake of himself : he was the corn that must be made to die. So saith S. Austin. This was the Corn that fell into the ground of our mortal nature, and was made to die by the Passion and the Cross.

The same brought forth the fruit of the salvation of them that were so predestined, and likewise the graces offered to the reprobate. Art thou likewise a corn in that ear, which is the Church, growing from the primal Grain? Then thou must become *the bread of Christ*, as the martyr Ignatius said of himself. So must thou be threshed, and ground, and kneaded, and baked in the oven of much adversity. Wilt thou not so behave thyself and so suffer, to become the bread of Christ?

2. *He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.* John xii. 25.

He extendeth unto us the meaning of the grain of wheat, that we likewise may bear much fruit unto life eternal. Now in which class standest thou? Among them that love their life with sensual love, or among them that hate it, and resist their base appetites, and treat not their senses with indulgence? It dependeth upon thee which thou wilt choose. I adjure thee, take not counsel of thy senses but of thy final end. They that set their love upon this world will find perdition in the world to come, and that eternal: so saith the Truth. But they that mortify themselves here will find there eternal beatitude. Advise thyself, looking to that end for which thou wast created.

3. *If any man serve me, let him follow me.* John xii. 26.

He speaketh of them that serve Christ in caring for the salvation of others. From them, as S. Chrysostom saith, He demandeth such works as accord with their vocation, and the imitation of Himself: and that is the path of a true mortification. This they must urge upon all whom they would lead into the way of salvation: therefore they themselves must walk therein. What of thyself? Thou wilt

to serve Christ, but thou wilt not be mortified. Now if the dignity thereof and Christ's own ensample move thee not, be moved by the recompense : *Where I am, there shall also my servant be.*

SATURDAY

CHRIST MUST BE LIFTED UP UPON THE CROSS.

1. *I, if I be lifted up from the earth.* John xii. 32.

He speaketh of the lifting up upon the Cross. Christ therefore laid the foundation of His lifting up and of His glory in the humiliation of the Cross. We likewise should *glory . . . in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Galatians vi. 14). Alas ! I fear thou seekest thy glory not in confusion of face, but in the praise and applause of men, and in the display of thy gifts. But this is clean opposite to the glory of Christ. *Will draw all men unto me*, bringing them under My power. For through the Cross, Christ brought it to pass that *at the name of Jesus every knee should bow*. Knowest thou wherefore thy passions be not subject unto thee ? It is because thou art not *lifted up from the earth* : thou mountest not the cross by treading down thy pride. Henceforth, *God forbid that thou shouldest glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2. *The people answered him . . . How sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up ? who is this Son of man ?* John xii. 34.

Behold the ignorance of the people. The Son of man is present to their eyes and ears, and they know Him not. Thou shewest the like ignorance in deed, though not in word. An occasion of humility is offered : thou hearest the voice of God within, saying unto thee, Here mayest thou tread under foot thy

pride. But the fear of shame answereth, There will be some other opportunity; this need not be done in public; and the like; as though Christ had not hung before the face of the world. Thou mightest merit Christ's reproof: *Yet a little while is the light with you; and His warning, Walk while ye have the light.* Dim it may be; but thou must use it if thou wouldest have it grow in clarity.

3. *But though he had done so many miracles before them, that is before the multitudes, yet they believed not on him.* John xii. 37.

An evil and corrupt life hindered belief. There be many of Christ's teachings that thou understandest with thy mind but, because thine evil affections pervert thine heart, thou actest not accordingly. *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him:* but how imperfect was this faith! for *because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.* Such is the power of the respect of persons. *For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* And shame on thee likewise! To avoid the displeasure of men thou chooseth to displease God.

THE TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

EVERY MAN SHALL BE JUDGED ACCORDING TO HIS LIGHT.

1. *I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not walk in darkness.* John xii. 46.

We sit in the darkness of our blinded minds and in that shadow of death cast by our own desires. The Light offereth Himself and inviteth us to draw near to Him. *He that followeth me shall not walk in*

darkness (John viii. 12). But we love the darkness more than the light. And wherefore? Because this light will not suffer us to be idle : faith which is dead sufficeth not, but one that issueth in works. Therefore it irketh us to follow the ever moving light of the Christ's own virtue. Shall it be ever so? If thou hadst lost the light of the body, what wouldest thou not do to recover it? And carest thou so little for the light of the soul?

2. *He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him : the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.* John xii. 48.

Thou sayest, God forbid that I should reject Christ! that were an horrible wickedness. Yet thou *receivest not His words*, which He speaketh unto thee by way of inspiration, or of light, or of commandment, or of precept. But that is to reject Christ. *These shall judge thee in the last day.* Then shall it be said unto thee, Thou hast quenched this light : thou hast despised this admonition : thou hast trodden under foot this rule. Beware therefore lest for rejecting these thou be thyself rejected.

3. *I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment . . . what I should speak.* John xii. 49.

In that hour how happy shalt thou be if thou canst but say, I have not spoken anything or done anything of myself, but all things by commandment of God and Christ. But this peradventure is more true of thine aspiration than of thy performance. Doest thou nothing at the invitation of thy senses? Sayest thou nothing at the dictation of thy passions? Is that to do and speak all things by the commandment of God? Deprive not thyself of that final consolation which none can give thee or take from thee but thyself.

MONDAY

OF THE CURSED FIG TREE.

1. *In the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only.* Matthew xxi. 18, 19.

In this fig tree behold thyself. The Lord hungereth for the fruit of thy good works. If thou art generous thou must render it for this very reason that He is hungry. He cometh to thee in those many graces which He bestoweth that thou mayest perform good works. Likewise in the hour of thy death He will come for thy particular judgment. Say now, what fruits hast thou born? He findeth nothing that hath savour. All that pretence and outward shew of virtue wherewith thou deceivedst men was *leaves only*. In that hour of judgment wouldest thou be found void of all fruit?

2. *And said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever.* Matthew xxi. 19.

Wherefore? Because it had leaves only. Yet S. Mark saith, *The time of figs was not yet* (xi. 13). Herein lieth a mystical signification. If He requireth fruit of a tree outside the time of fruit, how much more certain is it that He will require it of thee at the season when the fruit should be rendered? And dost thou yet neglect to use thy time, and passest by thine opportunities, and wastest thy graces, and, contenting thyself with leaves, makest a deceitful shew of virtue? Fearest thou not this word, *Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully?* (Jeremiah xlviii. 10).

3. *And presently the fig tree withered away.* Matthew xxi. 19.

It withered because it was deprived of the sap

which should nourish it. This is the punishment of them that respond not unto grace. That sap which should nourish them to produce good works is the assistance of grace: and with justice this is taken from them that use it not. They therefore wither, being deprived of grace, without which it is certain that we can do no good work. Those who would not when they could will not be able when they will. Is not this enough to persuade thee to respond to grace when it is offered thee?

TUESDAY

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD THAT WAS LET.

1. *There was a certain householder, even God, which planted a vineyard.* Matthew xxi. 33.

This vineyard is thy soul. *And hedged it round about*, with His commandments and a rule of life, *and digged a winepress in it*, that is the Sacraments, the fountains of grace: *and built a tower*, which thou mayest interpret as His own providence, or the protection of the angels, or the watchfulness of them that be set over thee: *and let it out to husbandmen*, that is to thyself. He therefore that created thee hath likewise planted thee in expectation of this fruit, that thou shouldest praise, reverence and serve the Lord thy God. But what fruit hast thou produced? Nothing, peradventure, but wild grapes or clusters of gall. How often hast thou broken down the hedge! How often *doth the wild* boar of thine evil affections *root it up!* Where is thy reverence for the Sacraments of the Blood of Christ? Where is thy respect and care for the watchfulness of God and of the angels and of thy superiors? Yet this vineyard hath not been given thee but let. The fruit thereof will be demanded of thee: and what wilt thou answer then?

2. *When the time of the fruit drew near he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.* Matthew xxi. 34.

Here is set forth what God hath done for thee, and thou for Him. How often hath *he sent his servants*, by the words of preachers, by the counsels of others, by interior illumination, warning thee to render thy fruits. *The husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another:* even so thou hast received the graces of God in vain, refusing to co-operate, hast quenched interior light, hast despised the warnings of others. O the wonder, both of God's goodness and of thine own unthankfulness!

3. *Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.* Matthew xxi. 36.

In this third sending thou hast the type of perfect obedience. So saith S. Gregory: *Though they knew well that other servants had been cruelly used, yet when they be sent they neither hesitate nor seek excuse, but perform what is commanded them without debate.* And doth not thy profession demand of thee a like obedience, inasmuch as thou hast been made Christ's soldier and servant? But is thine obedience like to theirs?

WEDNESDAY

THE MURDER OF HIS ONLY SON.

1. *But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.* Matthew xxi. 37.

After that thou hadst so often despised His grace, God might have struck thee down. But in His mercy even until now He hath sent His Son into thy heart

through the most Holy Eucharist, that His love might inflame thee, His humiliation bring thee low, His Cross and Passion move thy heart to render Him the fruit of mortification. Truly thou shouldest have revered the Son of God, and embraced His doctrine and ensample. Yet how far art thou gone astray from the way of His life !

2. *But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir ; come, let us kill him.* Matthew xxi. 38.

Little reverence had they for the son : no more hast thou, in that thou hast not feared to sin. Thou hast *cast him out of the vineyard*, as often as thou hast made room for sin. Thou hast *slain him* within thyself, and foully trampled His Blood beneath thy feet. Thou hast failed to reverence the Son of God : but the Father will do Him reverence, when He shall come to judgment : and the wounds of the Son shall be the final count in thy damnation.

3. *When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen ? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men.* Matthew xxi. 40, 41.

What other fate couldest thou have looked for when thou hast behaved thyself so ill towards the Son of God ? Yet God hath had compassion on thee. Lest He should *miserably destroy* thee, He hath set thee where thou mayest happily destroy thyself by diligent mortification. How deep is thy need of such a bridle to restrain thee from a further fall ! Yet how ready art thou to throw it off and refuse the restraint thereof !

THURSDAY

THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON.

1. *A certain king . . . made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.* Matthew xxii. 2, 3.

The Eternal Father hath betrothed His Son to the nature of Man. He hath prepared the banquet of the teaching of the Gospel and of perfection. To this banquet He hath bidden thee and many others. Thou didst accept His bidding when thou tookest upon thee the clerical estate. Therefore *He hath sent forth his servants*, even His holy inspirations, to say to thee, *I have prepared my dinner*: thou hast ready to thy hand thine opportunity to pursue the way of perfection. But thou hast *made light of it*: thou hast *gone thy way* to the *farm* of base affections, to the *merchandise* of creaturely consolations: thou hast despised those inspirations which bade thee come. Now thou seest thine unworthy behaviour.

2. *But . . . the king . . . was wroth . . . and destroyed those murderers.* Matthew xxii. 7.

Wherefore sent he not other servants, and yet others again, as did the householder to his vineyard? Wherefore was he wroth immediately and destroyed them? Because in that case the servants were exacting a debt, but in this they were graciously offering the banquet. But as the bestowal of grace is the chief token of God's majesty, so in His eyes to despise grace is to insult that majesty. How often hast thou thus despised His grace! For to despise and to refuse co-operation is one and the same. Therefore thou hast merited destruction. Thou owest it to God's mercy that He sendeth thee yet other servants, fresh inspirations and fresh lights. Take heed that thou receive them with more urbanity.

3. *The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.* Matthew xxii. 8, 9.

Hitherto thou hast refused the banquet of evangelical perfection, whether because thou caredst not for it, or for the difficulty of withdrawing thyself from earthly things. Thou knowest thine ill behaviour herein. Set thyself then at the far end of *the highway* of thy life. Ask counsel of death. Would he advise thee to take thy place at the banquet of perfection or to stay away? Take the advice he giveth. Do now what thou wilt wish that thou hadst done. Then it will be too late to wish.

FRIDAY

OF THE MAN THAT HAD NOT ON A WEDDING GARMENT.

1. *And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment.* Matthew xxii. 11.

By the wedding garment thou mayest understand a life and character conformable to thine estate. Ponder if thine be such. *And he saith unto him, with indignation, Friend (but he useth irony), how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?* It is not enough to seem religious: thou must be such in character and life. If at this moment God should call thee to endure the particular judgment, in what sort would He find thee? *And he was speechless.* Before God thou mayest not find a pretext to excuse thyself: thou shalt be speechless and confounded. Now, while thou hast time, speak and beg mercy, and provide thee with a garment that shall please thy Lord.

2. *Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness.* Matthew xxii. 13.

He is cast forth, saith S. Ambrose, *because being a sinner he thought to enjoy the reward of holiness.* God can ill tolerate one that claimeth to be religious, and yet conformeth not his life and character to religion. If thy life be different from thy profession, thou hast surely cause for fear. Thou mayest think that thou shalt not be seen among so many, but God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness. Though at this present thou be not cast out from the Church, thou shalt be cast out from before the face of God, who is the true Light, into darkness and blindness of thy mind. Thou shalt be bound hand and foot in the thongs of thine own affections that thou mayest henceforth do no good work. These be the rigid bonds that oft await the lax.

3. *Many are called, but few are chosen.* Matthew xxii. 14.

This it is that should keep thee in constant fear, and beget a carefulness concerning thy vocation that thou mayest take heed to follow it to the end. Thou hast been called, but art not on that account chosen : the call is not thy work but God's, and dependeth not on thy disposition aforetime. But thou canst not be chosen unto glory unless thou hast done thy part. Follow the counsel of the Apostle : *Give diligence to make your calling and election sure* (2 Peter i. 10).

SATURDAY

THE QUESTION CONCERNING PAYING OF TRIBUTE UNTO CÆSAR.

1. *Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.* Matthew xxii. 16.

Their praise of Christ is true indeed. Would that thou, who makest profession of following Christ, couldest earn the like without flattering words. But art thou true even within thyself? Dost thou not falsely call evil good, and good evil? Holdest thou *the way of God?* the way of His commandments? Turnest thou not aside by the flocks of thy companions, even of thy bodily passions? *Carest thou not for any but God?* Carest thou not for thyself? *Regardest thou not the person of men?* Dost thou not flatter one, and take offence at another, and attach thyself to a third with special affection? O bad disciple, how far thou art from deserving that praise thy Master earned!

2. *What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?* Matthew xxii. 17.

There is no evil in their words, but wickedness lurketh in their hearts. The question was framed by them that were taking *counsel how they might entangle him in his talk*. Therefore He rebuketh them: *Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?* and thereby sheweth how He hateth guile. He demandeth to see the money. It is laid before Him. *He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?* Whose image art thou? The image of God. But how hast thou deformed it! Thou hast changed it to the image of the earthy. Now it is time that as thou hast *borne the image of the earthy*, thou mayest *also bear the image of the heavenly*. Reform thyself, *until Christ be formed in thee* (Galatians iv. 19), and thou canst say, *I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me* (Galatians ii. 20).

3. *Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's.* Matthew xxii. 21.

To each must be rendered his own. However great thou art, thou belondest unto God: thy body, thy

soul, thy senses, all thy powers. Dost thou render unto God thy body and its senses? Dost thou use it for His glory, or for thine own comfort? Dost thou render Him thy soul, by thinking on Him, loving and fearing Him? Or dost thou suffer thine affection to creep towards created things? Consider the titles that God hath in thee: He created thee, hath redeemed thee, hath sustained thee, hath called thee, and loaded thee with many blessings. Do thou likewise render unto thy neighbour that thou owest unto him. He is the image of the same God as thou, of the same creation, redeemed by the same Blood.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

OF THE GREAT COMMANDMENT OF LOVE.

1. *Then one . . . lawyer asked him a question . . . saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law that which God insisteth on more than all? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . . This is the first and great commandment. Matthew xxii. 35—38.*

Understandest thou this? It is the first commandment, therefore with this thou must begin: it is the great commandment; therefore with it likewise thou must end. Love is the king of the affections: by it they all have motion. Love then must move them all, but must itself be ravished in turning to its proper end, outside which nothing is truly lovable. Hast thou kept this precept before thee as *first and great*? Hast thou never preferred anything before God? Would it were so! Henceforth at least let this be thy *first and great* aim, to love God. This thou mayest profess if thou direct all thine actions unto Him; if thou assign no portion in the heart to the

love of things created; if thou art bold with the Apostle to exult in obstacles, saying *Who shall separate us from the love of God?* (Romans viii. 39).

2. *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Matthew xxii. 39.

The rule for loving our neighbour is that each should treat him as himself. No man feigneth an insincere love towards himself. No man wisheth harm, even the smallest, unto himself: nay, no man wisheth himself anything but good, and that the very best. Therefore (and this likewise is a great commandment) thou must love thy neighbour unfeignedly: must protect him from evil, so far as in thee lies: must seek his good. But thy neighbour is not one, but all. Thou mayest not so fasten thy love upon one as to withdraw it from others.

3. *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* Matthew xxii. 40.

Here hast thou the motive for the love of God and of thy neighbour. Thine obligation to observe the law is absolute. Thou wouldest not transgress in any one particular? So much might we hope from any man of prudence. Then love. *He that loveth . . . hath fulfilled the law* (Romans xiii. 8). To this end therefore direct thy thoughts, thy words, thine actions, that all thy life may be an exercise of love.

MONDAY

THE PHARISEES ARE REPROVED.

1. *The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.* Matthew xxiii. 2, 3.

Though the prelate be evil, yet his authority is good and must be obeyed. Though the teacher be evil, yet

his teaching is sound and must be observed. But we are not to follow their examples. *Do not ye after their works.* Therefore thou hast no excuse, if thou say that thy superior doeth not himself that which he commandeth to be done. He will render his own account, and thou thine. *For they say, and do not.* That be far from thee. The key of heaven is not fair words but good deeds. Thou wilt not be asked what thou hast said, but what thou hast done. How base a thing it is to teach virtuous action by word, but by action to foul thine own teaching!

2. *But all their works they do for to be seen of men.* Matthew xxiii. 5.

The second fault which He rebuketh in the Pharisees is that they seek to be esteemed and praised of men. If they please men, they are satisfied. They *love the uppermost rooms . . . and the chief seats . . . and greetings in the markets*, and every public mark of honour. If they obtain these things they think themselves in heaven. But thou, who wouldest be the servant of God, must not be so. The Apostle's words are sure: *If I . . . pleased men, I should not be the servant of God* (Galatians i. 10). He that careth overmuch to please men cannot fail to displease God. Suppose that thou succeed in pleasing men, *thou hast thy reward.* Hath all thy labour then been wasted upon this smoke?

3. *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees . . . ! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.* Matthew xxiii. 27.

The third fault which He reproveth is the pretence of holiness. Where there is the feigning of holiness, be sure that there is the reality of vice. Appearance without substance is not good but harmful. God

looketh not at thine appearance but at thy self. Such art thou in God's sight as is thy heart and conscience. From Him and not from men will proceed thy judgment for eternity.

TUESDAY

THE PREDICTION OF THE DESOLATION.

1. *When ye . . . shall see the abomination of desolation . . . stand in the holy place* in the ruined temple in Jerusalem : (*whoso readeth, let him understand*). Matthew xxiv. 15.

Understand then that thou art thyself the temple of God, and art threatened with the desolation of death. Understand what thou must do aforehand to avert the perils of that day. Then will it be vain to will when thou hast no power to act. *Let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains.* Thou art of the chosen people : if thou wouldest be safe in that day, flee even now into that mountain which is Christ, and imitate His life. Thou which art *on the housetop* of lofty virtue, *come not down* to the low levels of this world. Thou *which* art *planted in the field* which is Christ, never *return back to take the clothes* of thy former conversation. (Thus saith S. Hilary.) If thou so act now, how great will be thy security in that day !

2. *Woe to them that are with child . . . in those days.* Matthew xxiv. 19.

That last day is ever at hand. This day may be thy last. Woe to thee if thou continuest thus as it were with child unto the end, big with good intentions, and hast not before that day brought them to birth ! When thou conceivest aught of good thou must straightway bring it forth in action : in that

day there will be no time. *But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter:* take heed betimes that death come not upon thee while thou art cold in the service of God: *neither on the sabbath day,* while thou art keeping festival in idleness. Every hour thou must take heed of all these things, since every hour hath its danger.

3. *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world.* Matthew xxiv. 21.

This thou must understand of the imprudent and the lukewarm who have delayed to act until it is too late. Then will the body be tormented in its final agony, but much more will be the torment of the conscience. For then shalt thou conceive a livelier sense of good and evil. Thou shalt find thy burden greater than thou hadst thought. So to escape that tribulation do now what then thou shalt wish that thou hadst done: avoid what thou shalt wish thou hadst avoided. Take counsel of death, how thou shouldest act, and hearken to his advice.

WEDNESDAY

WE MUST WATCH FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD.

1. *Watch . . . for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.* Matthew xxiv. 42.

His coming is sure; the time of it thou knowest not: therefore, if thou be wise, thou wilt stand always in fear. What if the Lord had come a few years since? How would He have found thee then? What if at this moment He should come? What wouldest thou wish that thou hadst done? What if thou knewest that He would come one hour from now?

What wouldest thou do? Do now what thou wouldest then resolve to do. It may be that He will so come. The hour is hidden from thee for this very cause that thou mayest beware of every hour that cometh.

2. *Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.* Matthew xxiv. 46.

Of such high worth is watchfulness that for this cause alone the Lord pronounceth that servant to be blessed. The house of the watchful is secure against the thief: and his possessions are not taken from him. The watchful letteth no occasion of well doing pass him by; he seizeth upon every one. Speak now for thyself. While thou hast paid heed to God, is there even one slight fault which thou hast committed? or one base desire whereto thou yielded? Hast thou not then accepted every opportunity of doing well? And is not this very blessedness, to live a spotless life? *Blessed is he that is found without blemish* (Ecclesiasticus xxxi. 8).

3. *But and if that evil servant shall say.* Matthew xxiv. 48.

Now look from the good and watchful servant to the evil one who saith in his heart, *My lord delayeth his coming*: who, drowned in lukewarmness, thinketh that there is yet time in which to act with fervency. O wretched man! *The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him.* Then what will be his fear and trembling! What if he be found smiting his fellow-servants, yielding to the passion of anger? What if *eating and drinking*, giving rein to the passion of desire? Methinks thou wouldest not so be found. Therefore be thou ready. But thou shalt never be truly ready, if thou be not ever ready.

THURSDAY

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS.

1. *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.* Matthew xxv. 1.

This parable likewise moveth thee to watchfulness. All alike were virgins, all *went out to meet him, all while the bridegroom tarried . . . slumbered.* Yet *five . . . were wise . . . five were foolish.* Not all took oil in their vessels. Thy lamp is faith; but faith alone is insufficient. Thou art not wise unless thou take unto thee also the oil of charity, and use all means to bring thee safe into the presence of the Bridegroom, lest then thy lamp be gone out. For *faith without works is dead* (James ii. 26).

2. *And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh.* Matthew xxv. 6.

The Lord cometh when we least expect Him. *Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.* What care and eagerness in each one's heart! It was time to meet the Bridegroom. Then the foolish saw their error: the oil of good works was lacking. But 'tis too late to think of beginning when it is time to make an end. *The foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil:* but all in vain: thou canst not profit by another's works at that time when *to every man is rendered according to his works.* Were not the foolish then filled with grief, and the wise with consolation? Choose among which thou wouldest stand, and use a carefulness like theirs.

3. *And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage.* Matthew xxv. 10.

Not they that first had to go to them that sold, which be they that delay to prepare themselves. He imperilleth his salvation who delayeth to use the

means thereto. We must provide beforehand the things which belong unto our salvation : it sufficeth not to wish for them when the time is come. *Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.* But fair words are of no avail when actions are weighed. It will not profit thee in that day to call Him Lord in word whom by thy deeds thou hast denied in life. Now therefore while it is yet the acceptable time and the day of salvation, thou must apply thyself to good works. The door is still open. *But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.* If thou knowest not God, or if thou servest Him not according to thy knowledge, thou mayest tremble lest thou also hear this voice of thunder.

FRIDAY

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.

1. *A man travelling into a far country . . . called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.* Matthew xxv. 14.

Here is yet another parable which counselleth us to be prepared. To one he gave five talents, to the second two, to the third one ; *to every man according to his several ability.* Consider the talents thou hast received from God, of body and of soul ; of nature and of grace. They belong to God and not to thee. Dost thou seem to have received but little ? God hath proportioned it to thine ability. Of that little thou shalt render account. To have received more would have turned to thy loss. Wherefore were talents entrusted unto thee ? That thou mightest trade with them : *Occupy till I come* (Luke xix. 13). The gain thou failest to make is thy Lord's loss. Thou mayest not then use them otherwise than as God willeth : yet

this hast thou done. What wouldest thou do to thy servant if he used thy money for his own comfort and pleasure? See if thou be not thyself even such a servant.

2. *After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.* Matthew xxv. 19.

So likewise will He reckon with thee: but peradventure the time will not be long. *And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents.* Likewise *he that had received two . . . two other.* The gain was proportioned to the talents. Each is called a *good and faithful servant*. Each is invited to *enter into the joy of his lord*. God hath no preference for him that hath received the more. He looketh to the use thou makest of thy talents and graces, not to the sum of them. He that had received five talents would not have been called good and faithful if he had gained but two. God will have no grace to be in vain. Therefore give earnest heed that thou receive no grace in vain. In this be watchful.

3. *He that had received the one talent . . . said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man . . . and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.* Matthew xxv. 24, 25.

He kept the talent safe and lost it not: why then is he thus sternly rebuked, *Thou wicked and slothful servant?* Because he traded not with it and made no gain as his lord required of him. Doth God thus chastise the neglect of but one talent? What wilt thou answer who has buried so many thousands in the earth, and hast employed for earthly purposes and sensual comforts those graces which God intended for heavenly gain. Now then at last begin to watch over thine affairs, that thou mayest be meet to hear that word, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

SATURDAY

OF THE LAST JUDGMENT.

1. *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.* Matthew xxv. 31.

Behold, thine advocate with the Father now appeareth as thy Judge; He that was pierced by sinners; He whom thou hast despised. *And before him shall be gathered all nations.* Behold the multitude of them that shall be judged: and thou shalt be amongst them. *And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.* Behold the difference of their estate. See the fear and trembling of those, and of these the joy and consolation. Who shall be on the right hand? *The sheep:* they that have followed the voice and leading of their Shepherd. Who on the left? *The goats:* they that have served their own lusts. God, here set me on the left hand as thou wilt, if there I may be placed upon the right!

2. *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.* Matthew xxv. 34.

He calleth the good to their reward before He condemneth the reprobate: for, as saith S. Chrysostom, He is ever more ready to benefit than to harm. It is His nature to do good: He punisheth unwillingly. How sweetly will their sentence sound in the ears of the righteous! Wouldest thou hear this sweet sound? By works of mercy thou mayest attain to it. So saith the Judge: *I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat.* . . . Without such works thy hope is vain. Therefore *whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might* (Ecclesiastes ix. 10). Neglect not little deeds of mercy. Nothing is so little as to be unworthy of that eternal kingdom if it be vested with the love of God.

3. *Then shall he say . . . unto them on the left hand, Depart. Matthew xxv. 41.*

Ah! what a clap of thunder in the ears of the guilty. *From me:* behold heaven's bolt, to be deprived for ever of God. *Cursed:* here is the very depth of woe, to be for ever hateful unto God. *Into everlasting fire.* What is the despair of them that be condemned to everlasting torment? *Prepared for the devil,* by Me: for thee, by thyself. What fellowship, to live for ever with the devils! Now what is the cause of this dreadful sentence? *I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat. . . .* Ye did not the works which I demanded: ye did those that I forbade. God! Use here the knife, the flame; if so thou mayest spare me in eternity! O eternity, eternity: *how bitter is the remembrance of thee!* (Ecclesiasticus xli. 1).

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